A Modern Apostle

etc.

Constance C. W. Naden

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A MODERN APOSTLE.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

SONGS AND SONNETS
OF SPRINGTIME.

Small crown 8vo, cloth, 5s.

LONDON: KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, & CO.

A MODERN APOSTLE;

THE ELIXIR OF LIFE;

THE STORY OF CLARICE;

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

CONSTANCE C. W. NADEN,

AUTHOR OF

"SONGS AND SONNETS OF SPRINGTIME."

"To bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
That is the top of sovereignty."
—KEATS, *Hyperion.*

LONDON:

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A MODERN APOSTLE.

A MODERN APOSTLE.

I.

A GARRET room, outlooking on dull streets ;
A bed, a chair or two, a half-starved fire ;
A little table, with a lamp, and sheets
Of printed proofs, and many a written quire ;
Bending o'er these, as though they held the sweets
Of Power or Wisdom, one in mean attire ;
A slender youth, with sallow mobile face,
Quick, dark-browed, nervous—sure, of Celtic race.

You cry, "A common picture!" Look again—
A massive forehead shades the features thin ;
The deep-set eyes are like stilettos twain,
That might transfix a heart grown hard with sin,
Or pierce a clean-edged wound through skull and brain,
A pathway for the Truth to enter in :
What strange bright soul inspires that body frail?
Hear if you will, and know young Alan's tale.

He was the prophet of a little sect
Which deemed itself a plot of favoured ground,
A nursery-garden for the Lord's elect,
Rich-soiled, high-walled, and sentinelled around
By angel-bands so keenly circumspect
They challenged every wind of dubious sound,
And quarantined the sunbeams, lest afloat
In any ray should lurk some poison-mote.

And Alan, nurtured from his infant years
To be a Levite, holy to the Lord,
Took up the ark of God with reverent fears,
And girded on the spiritual sword;
He would not flinch before Philistine jeers,
Nor take the Babylonish spoils abhorred,
Clean would he keep his soul, pure from the stain
Of thought, of earthly love, of lore profane.

Alas! not every saint can quite disown
Those two unsaintly organs, brain and heart,
Nor dwell upon a pedestal of stone
Until he grow the pillar's counterpart,
Nor can he by long prayers and fasts atone
For unregenerate virtues—the black art
Of feeling and of thought is ne'er unlearned,
And spirits come, although the books be burned.

Poor Alan, with the Gael in his hot blood,
And that insatiate mind, which rather durst
Plunge and be drowned in the full tidal flood
Of human wisdom, than live on athirst—
Ah! how could he, though bred from babyhood
To deem what most he craved a thing accurst,
Dwell in a land of streams innumerous,
And pine a self-afflicted Tantalus?

A second-hand bookstall was his fatal tree
Of knowledge, bearing divers kinds of fruit:
Peaches soft-rinded, melting lusciously,
Yet bitter-flavoured; on another shoot
Ruddy-cheeked apples, innocent to see,
But yielding potent cider; from one root,
It seemed, grew stimulants and anodynes,
Green opium capsules, and rich-clustered vines.

Here Alan read; at first, the guilt of reading
Weighed on his conscience; he would toss all night,
Praying the Holy Ghost to grant him leading,
And quell or quench this lawless appetite;
And then for days from that unhallowed feeding
Would hold aloof, till in his own despite
He turned unthinking down the accustomed street—
The serpent tempted him, and he did eat.

Soon he waxed bolder; could it be a crime
To learn how men with spirit overcast
Doubted, and told their doubts in prose or rhyme,
Prating of "Cosmos" or of "Protoplast"?
What then of Job, rash questioner sublime?
What of the weary throned Ecclesiast?
He reasoned; thus accomplishing his fall,
For Reason is the Sin Original.

And so at last he shut his eyes and plunged,
And took whate'er he found, both good and ill—
Pale Christianity with Christ expunged,
Faint Unbelief deploring its own skill,
Great tomes of metaphysic lore, that sponged
The World away, leaving the lonely Will:
Carlyle he conned, and—guilt of dye intenser!
Dallied with Darwin and with Herbert Spencer.

A thousand thoughts within his head ran riot,
Shunning at first his Faith, ensceptred long;
As Rome's old senators, august and quiet,
Sat on their ivory chairs, and cowed the strong
Victorious Gauls, as by a speechless fiat
Divine; till one of that barbarian throng
Stroked a grey beard; the answering blow began
The slaughter; weak wrath proved the god but man.

And thus, when Alan's Faith, by touches rude
  Disturbed, in angry tone began to speak,
And let the invading spirits know how crude
  She was in wit, in argument how weak,
What marvel that the unbaptizëd brood
  Taunted and mocked, and smote her on the cheek,
Cast her to earth, discrowned her reverend head,
And left her bleeding, senseless, well-nigh dead?

Yet still she was not slain, and Alan grieved,
  And fain had stanched her wounds, and set the crown
On her scarred forehead, and again believed;
  But Reason came and stayed him with a frown,
Saying, "Why crave and yearn to be deceived?
  She who lies low deserved to be cast down;
'Tis Nature's mandate—to the puny rival
Defeat and death; to the more fit, survival."

Yet many times poor wounded Faith uprose,
  But each time paler, fainter, freshly maimed,
And stronger and more valiant grew her foes,
  Their skill more sure, their strokes more truly aimed;
Till tortured Alan, reft of all repose,
  Plagued night and day by fiery thoughts untamed,
Sought, not the Deity on sapphire throne
Circled with elders; but a God Unknown.

It was a broken prayer, a wild appeal;
He spoke aloud, nor knew what words he said.
He did not clasp his hands, or bend, or kneel,
But paced the room with quick uneven tread,
Now hurrying in the tumult of his zeal,
Now halting, with a pang of sudden dread,
And now he seemed, with fixed gaze, to invoke
Some present Power: and these strange words he spoke:

"My God! whether thou be my Father too,
The Father who willed not to take from Christ
That bitter cup, but rather to renew
His strength to suffer and be sacrificed;
Or whether the green earth, the heavens blue,
And men — kings high enthroned, slaves cheaply priced —
Be but thy Visions — transient thoughts and themes,
Which thou, the World-Soul, shadowest in thy dreams:

"My God! if thou dost hear, or if indeed
Thy Spirit breathes in mine, and prays this prayer —
Thou knowest my pain, my strife, my famished need;
For health, love, gladness, let the morrow care,
To-day I hunger for a perfect creed:
If I be but thy dream, in me declare
Some symbol of the Truth — or let me die,
That, fleeting, I may know the Dawn is nigh.

"Is not this madness? Wherefore do I pray
To my own soul, and cheat myself with hope?
Seeking for earnest in the Cosmic play,
Weak victim of an Oriental trope!
And yet, O Truth, whom I blaspheme to-day,
Because with doubt and dread I scarce may cope,
Reveal thyself, and let thy sole word be—
'Leave all, take up thy cross, and follow me!'"

His deep eyes shone with rapture as he bade
To Love and Faith, for Hope's dear sake, adieu:
He owned no "great possessions;" but he had
Home, friends, a pittance, and from hearers few
Credence devout; though some looked shrewd and sad,
And shook their heads, and whispered that he drew
His doctrines from vile books of Babylon,
By scoffers, named Carlyle and Emerson.

Little he cared in that ecstatic hour
For friendly or for hostile tongues and pens;
Let the grim Orthodox be starched and sour,
The dull beasts growl morosely in their dens!
He felt but his own spirit's fervent power,
Which—by his thought as by a crystal lens
Converged and focussed in one burning spot—
Imaged that Sun, which mortal eyes see not.

A wondrous Vision rose before his sight—
The Earth in all her glory; flowers and trees;
Purple-robed mountain-ranges, every height
Gleaming like gold; rich meadows; boundless seas,
That changed from sapphire to green chrysolite
And topaz; in the land and ocean breeze
Life's voices murmured; scale and fur and wing
Bright glistened; while Man trod, apparent king.

But as he looked, there passed a stormful cloud
Athwart the sun, and wakened fiery strife
In heaven; he heard the waves roar, and the loud
Thunders; then deeper gazing, saw how life
Preyed upon life; how men, ruthless and proud,
Destroyed their fellow-men with club and knife
And fire-brand; or by deadlier arms, and fraud
Refined, and smooth hypocrisy unawed.

Yet in the stained Earth and the darkened Sun,
He saw, by some revealing miracle,
The Eternal Power which makes the Many, One,
Shining through all; the Law made visible:
As though this embryo world had just begun
To quicken with the shaping Principle
Which silently prepares its robe of youth
A body all translucent to the Truth.

Then came a Voice—"Behold what thou hast sought
So long; thyself, and Nature's Self, behold!
Thou couldst not spend thy prayers and tears for nought,
By human pain my Being I unfold;
I am the end and essence of thy thought,
The life of all new creeds and symbols old;
I rule in star and atom; all mankind
Work out my purpose in their battlings blind.

"But thou, whose eyes are opened; who dost see
Thy true Soul, and yet livest—thou, rejoice!
Go forth into the world and speak of me;
I choose thee from all men by thine own choice;
In evil and in good, in bond and free
I live, and utter truth in every voice;
Each sings his few faint notes of joy and woe,
Only my Prophets the full concord know."

The Voice passed, and the Vision, and gave place
To darkness and deep silence, as of death;
And the young mystic fell upon his face,
Scarce his heart beat, and scarce he drew his breath:
This glorious message to the human race,
Unknown to ancient seers, who cried, "Thus saith
The Lord" held all his sense and soul entranced,
While the hours fled, night deepened, morn advanced.

He felt as one who having grasped the whole
Of his desire, may rest; he seemed estranged
From realms of Space, and freed from Time's control,
Pure Spirit; not from dream to dream he ranged,
Nor prayed, nor hoped, nor pondered; for his soul
Was all concentred in one thought unchanged:
Till slowly he awoke, when dawn was near,
Mortal again; but God's anointed seer.

II.

Small, fragile, and dark-eyed was Alan's mother,
Of Highland blood; her solemn Saxon mate
Had ne'er been able quite to quench or smother
The poet-flame within her breast innate;
She had been wont, to Alan and no other,
Strange tales of wraith and kelpie to relate,
And wondrous legends of the second sight,
Claimed by her race as its ancestral right.

She told her tales in rapid whispers, sitting
Over the fire, with changeful glances wild,
And quick dramatic hands, that wove unwitting
A spiritual garment for her child,
Who all the while, his bright eyes never quitting
Her face, beside her crouched, enrapt, beguiled:
But these were secret pleasures; when she heard
A slow step, hushed was the half-spoken word.

For Alan's father, tall, large-boned, and grim,
Considered works of fiction merely lies,
And banned all poetry except the hymn;
His creed forbade him earthly gifts to prize,
Calling mirth, folly—love, a sinful whim:
Such faith at once contracts and satisfies
The constant soul; that one ideal spark
Shows all the world around blank, cold, and dark.

Each day he opened with a prayer, and singing;
The prayer a little sermon in disguise,
Teaching the Lord His own designs, and slinging
Smooth pebbles at unwise and overwise;
The hymn was loud, aggressive, as though flinging
Contemptuous pearls to neighbours or to spies;
Like a big drum he sang, beat with small skill;
Alan, more low; the mother, clear and shrill.

That morning, Alan sang with fervour double;
His inner exaltation overbore
All sad presentiment of toil and trouble
And severance of old friendships, and welled o'er
In natural song: the hymn said, "Life's a bubble,
A wave that breaks in foam upon the shore,
A fading leaf:" but Alan's voice rang out
As though its burden were a triumph-shout.

And after prayer, and hymn, and frugal meal,
He spoke, and all his glorious Vision told;
At first with painful strivings to reveal
His secret heart: but soon he grew more bold,
And e'en his father's look could not congeal
His ardour; as the petrifying cold
That binds the dull stream, Winter's prisoned vagrant,
Freezes not generous wine, nor ether fragrant.

The old man heard with bony brows drawn down,
And keen eyes watchful, and thin lips compressed;
The anxious mother shivered at his frown,
And trembled for her son, yet unconfessed
Shared in the new belief; she plucked her gown
With nervous fingers, while her loving breast
Was rent with fear, and hope, and awe-struck joy
That Heaven had found a Prophet in her boy.

The story ended; then, with look austere,
And speech deliberate, calm, the father spoke:
"I understand you well; your words are clear;
You fain would cast away the ancient yoke,
Renounce the Lord of Hosts, whom devils fear
And angels worship; and, forsooth, invoke
Some newer God, who dwells in rogue and thief,
Yet speaks by you, of his apostles chief.

"Call on your Baal! Try what he can do—
Surely he is a god, though he begins
With blasphemy—doubt not—your course pursue;
Shout, leap, and wound your soul, till suffering wins
Success; and then remember, that while you
Are feasting, I am fasting for my sins,
And wishing Heaven had blotted out the morn
On which a man-child to the world was born."

He broke off with a sob; Alan, aghast
At such emotion, hastened to his side,
Crying, "My father!" But he roughly cast
His son away, with gestures that defied
Sorrow and pity, and in silence passed
Out from the house, in his unbending pride
That did brave battle with a love and grief
More deep than aught except his stern belief.

And now the son and mother, each to each
The best-loved thing on earth, were left alone;
Then on his knees beside her, without speech
He fell, and took her cold hands in his own;
And she, all trembling, weeping the new breach
Between her dear ones, spoke in faintest tone,
Pleadingly, brokenly, as though she prayed
For grace, that some hard sentence might be stayed.

"My Alan, my dear son! my heart will break—
Although I always knew that God would send
His Spirit—that some morning you would wake
And feel that strength was granted you to spend
In some great service—only, for my sake
And for your father's, wait a little—bend
Awhile, before his anger—who can tell?
This wrathful mood may pass—he loves you well."

But he replied, "My mother, tempt me not!
For you I would do all things—all, save this—
Nay, I could wish my father's wish, to blot
My hour of birth, rather than idly miss
My birthright: grieve you that my zeal is hot?
You taught me, by your songs, your tales, your kiss
That human love, that heed of Wisdom's ray,
By which the heavenly Voice I now obey.

"Ah, do not weep, dear mother! Even those
Who cast me forth, shall hear the Word divine;
To-morrow, in the face of friends and foes,
My charge, once held so dear, I must resign—
But weep not!" He embraced her and arose
And went forth, that the April sun might shine
Into his heart, and quiet grief and wrath
And exultation, and make plain his path.

'Twas in an English town that Alan dwelt,
A town marked Liberal both by creeds and votes,
Where every individual voice did melt
In the loud hum of Progress; jarring notes
Of small exclusive sects were merely felt
Like nettle-stings when dock-leaf antidotes
Are plenteous; there, the party-leader's cue
Was to hope all things, and believe a few.

Turning a corner sharply, Alan met
George, an old school-mate, strong in politics,
Ruddy and fair, short-statured and thick-set,
Well versed in all the rhetorician's tricks;
An eye he had that you could ne'er forget,
Blue, humorous, clear; not steady to transfix
The erring, but most skilful to detect
A meeting's mood, and watch a word's effect.

"'Tis you!" he cried—"we have not met for long;
In truth, I wonder you are still alive,
Pacing your treadmill round with weary song,
Seeking rich honey in a dronish hive,
Boring deep wells Artesian in the wrong
Strata, whence you may dig, till you arrive
At the earth's core, yet no refreshing drop
You find, till at the central fire you stop.

"Some day, your friends will leave you in the lurch,
For what know you about the selfish springs
That move them to condemn all true research?
Like Gallio, I care nothing for such things—
And yet I care for *you*—I know a church
Where you might fearlessly unfold your wings,
Read, think, and labour, and perchance do good—
A free church, in a crowded neighbourhood.

"They want a parson now—the salary
Is poor, but better than your present pay;
And what is worse than the dull destiny
Of one condemned, year after year, to stay
Shut in a sect, and preach incessantly
The same old doctrines in the same old way?
Come forth, nor heed how bigots may abuse
The step—shake off their dry dust from your shoes."

The words, though kindly meant—the flippant cavil—
The confident suggestions, like commands,
Jarred upon Alan; then, he fain would travel,
And scatter the good seed in many lands;
Yet might he not, by George's aid, unravel
Present perplexities, and set his hands
To the Lord's plough? And would not God enlarge
His field, if true he were in one small charge?

Therefore he answered—"Come to-morrow night,
And tell me of this church—my trust I leave
Not for its dulness, nor for any spite
Against the people, who in faith receive
My words, and to their utmost power requite
My service; nay, I willingly would cleave
To this old home; but God has called me thence,
Granting me sight of his Omnipotence."

"Well," said the other—"so that you come out
I care not why. On Sunday evening, late,
When none of your good friends will be about,
And your last sermon will have fixed your fate,
Expect me. Now, good-bye; I have to spout
To-night, at a political debate,
And must begin to think what I shall say—
So, till to-morrow!" And he went his way.

Then Alan wandered far, beyond the town,
Past budding hedge-rows, where the spider weaves
Her tracery; past trees with branches brown
Seen through their April robe of light green leaves;
And past bright gardens, where the tulip-crown
And fruit-buds pink, are spoiled by wingëd thieves;
Such common sights, and the soft wind's caress
Filled all his soul with strength and happiness.

Farther he rambled ; on through country lanes
And copses where the ferns their fronds unrolled,
And pastures where the gentle spring-tide rains
Jewelled anemone and marigold ;
Thrushes and blackbirds carolled joyful strains,
And all things sang, in cadence manifold—
"Rejoice, rejoice, with bird and tree and flower!
Rejoice, rejoice, in plenitude of power!"

Homeward he turned, his ardent mind sincere
Feasting on this glad gospel ; soon, ah soon !
The trembling mother must forget her fear,
The steadfast father must accept that boon
Dearer than rubies ; all should see and hear
With souls undimmed, exultant in the noon
Of cloudless Truth ; Faith, Hope, and Love, these three,
At last should blend in perfect trinity.

III.

Alan had preached his sermon—grave, devout,
Yet full of lightnings and electric shocks
For tender souls who reckoned even doubt
Less damnable than faith unorthodox;
Henceforth the young apostle stood without
Their iron gates, made fast with bars and locks,
Till his last banishment to realms beneath,
Where scoffers ever weep and gnash their teeth.

But now he sat and chatted in his room
With his friend George, who comfortably smoked
His pipe, unthinking of so dread a doom,
And talked in worldly tone, that half-provoked
Alan to wrath; yet on the tranquil fume
Floated kind wishes, clad in words that joked,
And many a scheme, by friendly warmth begot,
And pictures quaint of Alan's future lot.

"The people, chiefly poor and ignorant,
Will be a stony field for you to plough,
What thoughts they spare from misery and from want
May they be yours! But let me show you now
Another aspect: you will have a scant
Sprinkling of better hearers, to allow
Scope for your genius—men of moderate wealth,
Whose tonic for their spiritual health

"Has been to found a church where all is free,
The seats, the service, and the preacher's thought,
Where e'en the poorest may behold the Tree
Of Life, and taste, and eat his fill for nought:
A fine idea, though such things to me
Are nothings: well, their cleverest member caught
Directly, at your name; for he had heard
You once, and had remembered every word.

"Their cleverest, not their richest: though he rules
The others, he is but a *dilettante;*
(Our thirty millions, true, are 'mostly fools,'
Wisdom is rare, and men of mind are scanty!);
They reverence him, with faith that never cools
For having meant to write a book on Dante—
All, save his helpmate; commonplace and keen,
Through her sage lord her wifely eyes have seen.

"Then their one daughter—did you meet her ever?
Slim shape, and soft brown hair, and dark-blue eyes,
So gentle, that you scarce believe her clever,
And quite entrancing, were she not so wise:
But oh, beware of Ella's beauty! never
Let that Madonna fairness win your sighs;
Or, if you should address her, use your tact,
And study first the sciences exact.

"The heavenly host she watches from her attics,
She knows the name and place of every star;
True incarnation of Pure Mathematics,
She cares for all that is abstruse or far:
Go, woo her with Dynamics and with Statics,
And term your love a force molecular;
She then, perchance, may fathom your intention—
Plain language is beneath her comprehension.

"Enough of this! you are a son of God,
And do not haunt the daughters of the earth—
Yet who can tell? you are no frozen clod;
Perchance fair Venus, whose celestial worth
You long have slighted, may prepare a rod
To torture you, or else a cup of mirth
To tempt you—Well, I hope 'twill be the latter:
As to the church, be easy, for that matter

" Is practically settled. Now, good-night,
And happy dreams of—whatsoe'er you choose ! "
They parted. Alan, by the fire's dim light
Long meditated on the hopeful news,
And felt that he unthankfully should slight
Heaven's leading, could he hesitate to use
A proffered chance of free unfettered work,
Came it from Jew, or Infidel, or Turk.

And then he looked from out his window high,
As though the fresh night air could put to proof
His purity of heart : against the sky
Each house stood black, distinct, and each wet roof
Gleamed in the moonlight ; tapering slenderly
Rose many a spire : the city seemed aloof
From care and toil ; and said, by silence deep—
" Doubt not nor ponder, but in gladness sleep."

Why should I weary the long-suffering Muse
And listener patient-souled, with tedious telling
Of letters, of official interviews,
Of change of ministry, and change of dwelling,
And how the fond proud mother wept to lose
Her son, and how the father's heart was knelling
The death of hope, or how the elders prayed
In vigorous language for the renegade ?

Enough, that Alan found himself installed
In his new church, and gloried in the sense
Of working unimpeded, unenthralled;
Here was no sentinel, demanding "Whence
Come you, and whither go?" A town unwalled
Was that society, with no defence
Save the united force of Faith and Science—
In truth, a somewhat perilous alliance.

Here he proclaimed the Brotherhood of Men—
God lives in all; by Him are all inspired,
And so are equal; to the Prophet's ken
The king is level with the drudge o'ertired,
And what he is, should seem: with tongue and pen
He preached Equality, until he fired
His people; and ere long, the novel schism
Was christened "Pantheistic Socialism."

Such was his lot, when first I bade you look,
Kind listener, at his study, where he wrote
His deep thoughts in a world-convincing book;
But that was night—his days he would devote
To patient work in many a squalid nook,
Amid such sights and odours, as denote
The homes of women dulled in heart and eye,
Mothers of starveling babies, born to die,

Or for worse fates. Such wretches he would aid
From his own scanty income ; sometimes even
They ventured in to hear him, half afraid,
And did not understand, but felt near heaven :
Of motley stuff his little flock was made,
Rich men, poor men, and beggars, with a leaven
Of gentle women ; but for him, the place
Contained but one, with sweet Madonna-face.

The blue eyes gleamed with quivering light, as though
Some lamp within had just begun to shine,
The pale cheeks flushed, as 'mid the latest snow
Bloom faint pink almond blossoms—welcome sign
Of coming Spring—he deemed this changeful glow
Enkindled by an intuition fine
That pierced through speech and symbol, ne'er content
Until it knew the soul of what he meant.

He watched the face on Sundays, dreamed of it
Through all the week ; in haunts of dark distress
And sordid shame, he saw its beauty flit,
Now, for a moment, calm and passionless,
And now again with sudden radiance lit,
Like some new-born diviner consciousness
Evolving from completed human grace
The future parent of a nobler race.

No Raphaelite Madonna has a brow
Like Ella's, nor could e'er have learnt the use
Of sciences to which by voiceless vow
Her strength was dedicate ; in themes abstruse
She locked herself, and scarce had craved till now
A truth not yielded by her life recluse ;
As little children, miserably fed,
Grow faint, but are not hungry for their bread.

For she, with innocent clear sight, had found
That those about her merely thought of thinking,
And felt they ought to feel ; with quick rebound
She drew her life away from theirs, and shrinking
From windy verbiage, craved some solid ground,
Trying to satisfy her soul by linking
Truths abstract ; no vague talk of liberal views
Can alter cosine and hypotenuse.

Her mother, with shrewd mind of meaner class
Laughed inly, when she heard some "thinker" draw
The wonted music from his sounding brass,
Showing that with approval Christ foresaw
This nineteenth century of steam and gas,
And Mammon, and "Inexorable Law,"
Or wresting from St. Paul a strong opinion
In favour of the theory Darwinian.

But Ella grieved ; her father's lucubration
On Dante (which, in sooth, till Doomsday comes
Shall never be writ down)—the declamation
Of pseudo-scientific Chrysostoms—
Rejoiced her not ; she gained a reputation
For gentle chillness ; and, since nought benumbs
The heart so much, as when our friends suppose
It cold, poor Ella slowly, sadly froze.

Yet Ella was a woman, and the frost
Bound not her inmost nature ; still she kept
The natural love for children ; she had lost
A baby sister once, and when she slept
Often the little child's white image crossed
Her dreams, and nearer stole to her, and crept
Close to her heart ; then, piercing through her sleep
Remembrance thrilled, and she would wake and weep.

When Alan came, at first she only smiled
At his fresh ardour ; yet she oft would check
Her satire ; for he seemed a very child,
Pure, single-minded, with no marring fleck
Of self-conceit, although by dreams beguiled ;
And she would sigh, to think how time must wreck
His hopes, and all his fancies disenchant ;
So mused the girl, like some old maiden aunt.

But soon, a strange new light began to break
Upon her mind, and dubiously to fall
O'er thought and feeling: what if the mistake
In truth, were hers; and what if after all
This visionary seer were more awake
Than she, the sage and mathematical?
'Twas thus she pondered, as in church she sate
Listening, with changeful colours delicate.

From pitying, she began to sympathise,
From sympathising. almost to revere,
The inner light grew radiant in her eyes,
And she forgot her wise predictions drear,
And she forgot to carp and criticise,
And all things she forgot, except to hear,
And hope, and with a willing mind receive
The mystic word—and lastly, to believe.

Her face grew fairer, and her step more light,
As though she entertained, not unaware,
An Angel: as some holy anchorite
When heavenly visitants have deigned to share
His hut and food, will feel a sweet delight
Henceforth, in water pure and meagre fare;
So Ella found new pleasures in her home,
And fresh gradations in Life's monochrome.

More bright and blithe she was, than any yet
Had known her ; all around might well discern
The change, much marvelling what amulet
Transformed the gentle maiden taciturn
So gladsomely. When she and Alan met,
As soon they *must* meet, haply might she learn
The spirit of all prophets who have dwelt
On earth, and dream what Christ's apostles felt.

IV.

At last they met, once, twice, and many times,
Until she knew the secret of his being,
That essence which an ardent zeal sublimes
From the dull ashes; faith was slowly freeing
Her soul from fear; she felt as one who climbs
High peaks at midnight, knowing, but not seeing
The depths beneath him, while his lantern's glow
Shines brilliantly before him on the snow.

What shall the sun reveal? A cloud-robed world,
A space of white about the traveller's feet,
And all things else impenetrably furled
In vapours cold? Or will the mist retreat,
Unveiling valleys green, with lakes impearled,
And bounded by a curve of Alps, that greet
The dawn with rosy summits, towering high
Beneath the paling moon and faint blue sky?

But Alan—with heart pure and passionate
That ne'er of any woman's love had dreamed,
To noble service ever consecrate—
Now joyed in broadening, brightening noon, that streamed
Above him and around, till Life and Fate
Were nought but one glad radiance, and Love seemed
The fruit of Truth's white flower, grown sweet and ripe;
Nay, Truth herself was here, the perfect type

In a fair woman's form; the one Ideal
Shining all glorious 'mid the figures grey
Of Earth; how different from the hideous Real
He saw in court and alley day by day!
He was of those who going down to Sheol
Can find God there, yet none the less do pray
To see Him, not through veils of shame and vice,
But as man first beheld in Paradise.

Yet when the Truth is clad in beauteous flesh
That man may know it, human love will claim
Its rights; and daily deeper in the mesh
Sank Alan's heart, and all his fine-strung frame
With passion throbbed. One August evening fresh
He walked in Ella's garden, while the flame
Of sunset lit the trees with golden sheen,
Changing to chrysoprase their sombre green.

And she was at his side ; he spoke to her
Eagerly, earnestly, and yet he said
No word whose mere significance could stir
The pulse ; but every syllable, instead
Of telling its own tale, was messenger
Of Love ; and answering came the fitful red
To Ella's cheeks ; though, as they slowly walked,
'Twas but of Alan's mission that they talked.

Until he said, close-bending, "When at first
I came, and saw the rows of faces blank,
The brutish and the ignorant, and worst
The self-complacent rich, my spirit sank
A moment ; then a flood of sunshine burst
Upon me, for I saw your eyes that drank
The message, and returned it richly bright,
As this deep rose gives beauty to the light.

"And as the rose within her petals hides
The rays which they reflect not, yet receive,
Oh, tell me now that in your heart abides
Full confidence—nay, Ella, do not grieve,
Look up—assure me that one Vision guides
Your steps and mine—that you in truth believe ;
I know it, yet forgive me if I seek
To hear it—Ella ! speak to me—oh speak ! "

She faltered "I believe" with head low-drooped,
And tearful eyes—new longings and alarms
Athwart her inward vision swiftly trooped;
As one whom unfamiliar music charms
Breathless and mute she stood; but Alan stooped
And kissed her lips, and clasped her in his arms,
Crying, "I love—I worship you! We share
One life—oh joy too great for man to bear!"

And she replied; such answers are not made
In speech articulate; no word she spoke
For Alan's ears, but on his breast she laid
Her head, as though she sought at once to cloak
And to express her passion. They had stayed
Thus, for long hours, but that a loud sound broke
Upon their rapt communion, like the knell
Of that bright moment—'twas the evening bell

For prayer. They hurried in, nor watched the glow
Of sunset fading from the purple beech,
And, bidding fond good-night, she bade him go,
That she, with chosen words, might try to reach
Her parents' hearts, before she slept. And so
The sacred love-tale was profaned by speech,
Till from the two she won a slow consent,
Mingled with scolding and with merriment.

The father, half in earnest, half to tease,
Exclaimed—"Just like Cadijah and Mahomet,
Or Beatrice and Dante—whom you please!
I wish you joy, my daughter, and your comet
Is brilliant." The shrewd mother, ill at ease,
Said "No—your will-o'-the-wisp! What *can* come from it?
And what's the use of all your Conic Sections
If like a fool you yield to your affections?"

But Ella gloried in the grudging "Yes;"
Love lent the charmëd days bright plumes to fly,
Woke her each morn, and filled her loneliness
With light, and sang at eve her lullaby:
Yet, as the spring-buds burst, her joy grew less—
No chill distrust of Alan's constancy,
Nor any fear that time could e'er abate
His fervid love, made her disconsolate.

It was not this; but her deep-thinking brain
Learned slowly, mournfully, against her will,
How mystic faiths are woven from a vain
Tissue of dreams, which hold men captive still
In day-light; and she saw, with bitter pain,
That every thought, deed, passion, good or ill,
Might thus be sanctified, and at its need
Find refuge in some hospitable creed.

And when she conned the pages of his book,
And saw his cherished thoughts, all printed clear,
Robbed of that glow suffused of voice and look
Which made their mellow misty atmosphere,
She shivered, almost thinking she mistook
The words, that seemed so living to her ear,
So spectral to her eye—men praised the style,
Bold, fiery : mute she heard, with pallid smile.

Not that her love diminished—nay, it grew :
As oft from wild delirious words we know
The spirit's beauty, so his nature true
Shone out more bright through the delusive show
Of gloaming fantasies ; but well she knew
Her Reason tipped the dart, and strung the bow,
To slay his Passion : with a wife to dwell
Not wedded to his soul, for him were Hell.

Confute a theologian ; with sharp word
He answers you, yet may forgive the thrust
If he be quite convinced that you have erred :
But tell Jehovah's prophet that his trust
Is nought—he will not rage, but he will gird
His loins in silence, and will shake the dust
From off his feet, and go his lonely way,
Over dry desert sand, or fenlands grey.

She pined with strange distress—the woman's heart
Throbbed, quivered, bled ; while the logician's mind
Worked on relentless, heeding not the smart,
Ne'er to be drugged, or deafened, or made blind ;
Against herself her riven Self took part,
The martyr and the torturer combined :
Stretched on the rack, bound with flesh-cutting rope,
What is the poor maimed anguished victim's hope ?

What is a woman's hope, when she is torn
By passion and by thought, and cannot cease
To think or love, nor teach herself to scorn
Her deepest life, nor ever win release
From the harsh yoke, too heavy to be borne,
Of iron principles that crush her peace :
Will not some opiate give her dreamful rest
Till she return to the Great Mother's breast ?

Nay ! rather let her maim her shrinking soul—
That groping she may climb her lame way in
To Life—than down to Death, seeing and whole,
Spring, damned by the inexpiable sin
Of treachery ; and in the longed-for goal
Find that fair-seeming Heaven which traitors win,
Whose gate is bliss ; whose midmost point, a germ
Of Hell, whence issues the undying worm.

'Twas a May twilight—and the two once more
Paced round the walks where they were wont to spend
Sweet hours : but Ella spoke as ne'er before—
Calmly, as one who, dying, tells his friend,
His best-belovëd friend, that life is o'er,
That now is come the dead, blank, hopeless end ;
Yet weeps not, neither moans, because his breath
Is well-nigh quenched by the chill winds of Death.

But Alan stayed her—"No, it cannot be !
This is some fevered nightmare dream !" he cried—
"Wake and believe, dear Ella ! wake and see
How Earth and Heaven by God are glorified ;
His presence shines in every flower and tree,
And in ourselves—and shall He be denied
By those who breathe His Spirit ? Be not you
Like the blind throng, who know not what they do !

"Forgive me, Dearest ! you are sad and pale ;
I speak too harshly." But she answered—"Nay,
Be not so gentle, lest your words avail
Too much—lest I be tempted to obey
Love, and not conscience : my resolve is frail,
Yet I *will* speak : oh turn your eyes away,
And do not touch my hand, the while I try
To tell my thought—until we say good-bye.

"You are as true as any seer of old,
Prophet, or martyr; you would sell your life
That Faith might rise up from her torpor cold,
And vanquish doubt, hypocrisy, and strife:
For this I loved you—yes, long ere you told
Your love—yet, Alan, if I were your wife
I should be but a mist, a leaden cloud,
Folding your spirit in its clinging shroud.

"For all my faith is gone, that seemed so sure:
Even that God who every day is wroth
With sinners, gives a refuge more secure
For the sad heart; the banquet is of froth
Which you in mercy set before the poor,
Not knowing: Alan, Alan, that we both
Might strive to find, by patient thought and search,
Some firm foundation for a nobler Church!"

Her voice grew stronger, and more clear her glance,
As thus she pleaded, and to thoughts long pent
Within her breast, gave language; she perchance
Clung to some hope: but Alan, eloquent,
Broke forth with all the story of his trance,
And how he was inspired of God, and sent
To tend the flame Divine 'mid vapours damp
And cold—the dim yet ever-burning lamp.

She listened—then she said, in tones that fell
Upon his soul and senses heavily—
" Long have I pondered o'er this vision-spell,
For me it holds no magic. You are free,
And we must part—kiss me and say Farewell.
Yet are you mine to all Eternity—
No other voice or look my heart can move,
I love you with irrevocable love."

The pallid mournful face, the solemn tone,
Slew all his hope. He clasped her to his breast,
And kissed the passive lips, that chilled his own
Like icicles, and speechlessly expressed
Her anguish—till she cried, with sudden moan
Thrusting him from her—" Leave me—it is best—
I am too weak to bear it." Forth he went
Alone, with quick blind steps, and head low-bent.

When some poor lonely pilgrim devotee
Who worships in the temple of a saint,
Coming one morning with his fervent plea
Finds the shrine empty—trembling then and faint
He leaves the stone, deep-printed by his knee,
And goes out homeless, with no wild complaint,
But stricken. Yet to feel what Alan felt
Is sharper pain—to see the spirit melt

And fade and vanish from some image fair
Of Truth, whose glory clothed it like the sun,
But now departs, leaving it cold and bare
And lifeless. One dark moment, only one
He doubted his Ideal; but his prayer
And answering Vision, came afresh, and spun
A web, that nought could break except the power
Of Life's last sad illuminating hour.

And Ella? Almost stupefied with woe,
Of *him* were all her thoughts, as bowed, forlorn,
He left her, sorely wounded, as a foe
Can never wound. She scarce could stay to mourn
Her own maimed life, but, pacing to and fro,
Pictured his days of weary labour, shorn
Of joy; until the bitterness of loss
O'erwhelmed her, and she stooped to take her cross.

She set herself to suffer and endure
In silence. Life, though mutilated, marred,
Must yet be lived; there was not any cure,
Nor any further stab; the gate seemed barred
Alike to hope and fear, and she was pure
At least, of treason; yet the thought was hard
That this last act of loyalty could gain
Nought from her Love, save haply his disdain.

Heart-sore, all probing hints she sought to parry,
But when at length she spoke, her father said—
" My dear, a man of genius should not marry,
It should be penal for a seer to wed ;
You know, Ezekiel's wife must help to carry
His ' burden.' " " Yes, and help to earn the bread,
And bake it," said the mother—" glorious fate
No doubt— for ' glorious ' means ' unfortunate ' ! "

V.

Summer passed by, and Autumn; Winter came
With grey cold days and black unpitying nights,
And many children gathered round the flame
Of Yule-tide logs, and dreamed of new delights
With the New Year: many, with shivering frame,
Half-naked, famished, crept to see the sights
In gay shop-windows—a celestial treat!
On earth there might be bread, and sometimes meat,

But this was Heaven. They had their make-believe,
For every child can find an open door
Even from Hell, and thoughtlessly achieve
Proserpine's miracle; while she who bore
The starvelings, crouches too benumbed to grieve
In her cold room, and sees but the bare floor
And fireless hearth, and hungers through the day,
Idle, or toiling hard for paltry pay.

Wages were low that winter ; work was scant ;
And many little groups of men would cluster
Round the street corners ; grim they were and gaunt,
With hollow cheeks and sunken eyes lack-lustre ;
And oft, attracted by the ready rant
Of some stump orator, a throng would muster
To hear of wrongs and rights, and pass a plan
For straightway equalising man and man.

And Alan went among them ; he was pale
And thin as they, but his deep eyes outshone
With self-consuming light, that told a tale
Of Hope and Love irrevocably gone,
But Faith still clinging to her Holy Grail—
That sacred poison-wine, which made him wan
And fiery, giving strength to brave and bear
All ills, all woes ; strength even to despair.

But at the people's groan, his heart waxed hot,
And loathed the miserable prayers and pence
He had to give, and private pangs forgot
In the one sorrow of his impotence
To succour ; he would say he scarce knew what
In fire-words, winged with fatal eloquence,
And then go home, and in his study brood
Through night, till dawn, careless of sleep and food.

Thus the drear days dragged on ; and with the spring
No comfort came, but rather woe more keen,
For Poverty more deeply plunged her sting,
And stalwart frames grew slouching, pinched, and lean,
And there arose that sullen murmuring
Which may mean little, but perchance may mean
The roll of coming thunder, and the flash
Of lightning—or the earthquake's deadlier crash.

One day, as Alan sat intently writing
An earnest tract on Dives and his dogs,
A sudden tumult, as of fire or fighting,
Pierced though the smoky mist which ever clogs
The air of towns ; he heard a voice inciting
To deeds of vengeance—" Are you stones or logs ?
Prove yourselves men ! Burst on them like a flood—
The rich, who batten on your flesh and blood ! "

He started up ; that moment, his old friend
George, rushed in, crying—" Quick ! the mob ! a riot !
The people cried for bread, and we who tend
Their souls political, replied ' Be quiet !
Hope on ! ' while such as you, the case to mend,
Fed them on too inflammable a diet ;
And so, among us all, the mischief's done,
The fire-brand lit, the rioting begun.

"But now, make haste! for some of them have taken
The road to Ella's home—don't turn so white!
Perhaps they'll only ask for bread and bacon,
And beer, their one inalienable right;
Cheer up, my friend! I know you are forsaken,
But here's a chance to act the doughty knight,
Boldly to face the many-headed giant,
And hold your Love 'gainst all the world defiant!"

They chose the quiet streets, where the fierce rabble
Came not; all doors were barred, all shops were shut,
No children in the gutters dared to dabble,
No woman chatted with her neighbour; but
From the great thoroughfares they heard the babble
Of many voices; once, the fog was cut
By springing flame, and the friends faster strode,
Winding through bye-ways to that dear abode.

Alan, impatient, fevered, onward urged
His comrade; they came nearer to the noise,
And in a fair broad road at last emerged,
Filled with a ragged rout of men and boys
And women; like a stormy sea it surged,
That blindly, deafly, ruthlessly destroys:
Some carried stones; some, staves; some, iron crows
And rails; some, bludgeons, fit for deadliest blows.

Some faces were pale, wolfish; some on fire
With drink, and hope of spoil or forced largess
From wealthy homes; in tawdry torn attire
The women scarcely hid their nakedness;
And there were jests, foul as the city mire
Whose old stains clung to many a tattered dress:
Such was the tide that towards the suburb rolled
Where Ella dwelt. One moment, speechless, cold,

Stood Alan: then, with sudden leap, he sprang
On a low wall, and beckoned to the crowd
That fought, broke windows, trampled gardens, sang
And swore, around him; but his voice rose loud,
And through the clamour like a trumpet rang;
Its clear bold accents for a minute cowed
The people; or perchance they thought he came
To spur them forward to their desperate game.

"My friends!" he cried, "all human hopes and lives
Are truly one; no man can harm another
But blindly with his proper Self he strives,
His own soul in the body of his brother:
In you, in all, the spark of Truth survives—
Is there no father here, is there no mother,
No husband, wife or friend, who knows the tie
Which makes two beings one until they die?

"That tie is but an image and a sign
Of universal kinship—to reveal
How men are sharers in the life Divine:
Think not the rich man's woe the poor man's weal!
When the brain languishes the heart must pine;
To hate is atheism, and to steal
Is sacrilege; to murder, suicide:
I too have erred, who should have been your guide;

"Oft I spoke rashly, for my heart was sore
To see you suffer; humbly I avow
My fault, my crime—Ah help me to restore
The peace I troubled; let me lead you now
Back to your homes." Then rose an angry roar,
And a great stone struck Alan on the brow,
He staggered; and before his friend could bound
To save him, he fell prone with heavy sound.

George raised him in his arms—bleeding, death-white,
Unconscious—then to face the crowd he turned:
"This is the man who laboured day and night
For you and for your children—yes, he burned
His life away, and loved you in despite
Of all ingratitude, and still returned
Good for your evil—his own wants denied
For you—that you might live, he would have died.

"And you have slain him. Help me, some of you
To stanch his wounds—those whom he visited
When they were ill, and brought them aid—those, too,
Who starved, until he gave them his own bread—
And if by chance there should be here a few
Who were in prison, and he came and said
Kind words of hope—'tis only these I pray
Now for their help to carry him away

"And bear him to his friends." The crowd was hushed.
But he who seemed the chief, a strong tall man,
Came forth with halting step, and features flushed,
And look half-shamed, half-sorry, and began—
"The parson nursed me when my foot was crushed,
I would not do him harm. Here, Ned and Dan,
Help us to carry him—and you, John, go
Quick, for a doctor—'tis an ugly blow,

"But worse have mended." Now the throng, subdued
Almost to soberness, his words obeyed,
Seeming a funeral pageant motley-hued:
As once through Florence paced a cavalcade
Of skeletons and spectres—all the brood
Of Famine and of Death—such show they made;
And bearing Alan in procession grim
Straightway to Ella's home they carried him.

They passed fair gardened homes that rich men build,
But every man was hidden, as a rat
Hides in his hole; like birds affrighted, stilled
By coming storm, crouched those who "eat the fat
And drink the sweet," that Scripture be fulfilled—
On, till George saw the house where Ella sat
Alone, for both her parents were away,
Spending in Rome their Easter holiday.

She all the day had shivered in suspense
For Alan's safety, growing sick with fear,
And making now and then a vain pretence
To read, but straining all the while her ear,
And starting at each murmur, to see whence
The voices came; for as they grew more clear
She felt, she knew, that Alan must be nigh,
To turn the rabble backward, or to die.

There came a roar—she shuddered—then a lull—
She waited at the window, in her dread,
And soon she heard again the murmurs dull,
And saw at last a strange procession, led
By men who bore some burden pitiful—
Was it a comrade, wounded—dying—dead?—
But knew she not the figure and the gait
Of Alan's friend? Oh Heaven! Came they too late,

And did they bring him dead, that she might see
His face, and weep with unavailing woe?
Nearer they came and nearer—Yes, 'twas he—
Her cheeks turned white, her heart stood still, as though
She too must fall; but, tottering dizzily,
She left her room in piteous need to know
The truth—with quivering hands unbarred the door,
And ran to meet the crowd, and what it bore.

George saw her coming in her breathless haste,
With wide eyes, feet that terror seemed to spur,
Long hair unknotted, floating to her waist;
Till then, he scarce had spent a thought on her,
But now he groaned; 'twere easier to have faced
A furious mob; he felt a murderer:
Forward he stepped, and lest her strength should fail,
Stayed her, and told, as best he might, the tale.

"He is not dead!" she cried—"not dead!" and then
Her heart grew stronger; Alan's face she saw
And scarcely trembled; to those rugged men,
Those hungering, thirsting breakers of the law,
She spoke, with accents that seemed alien
To her own voice; they listened half in awe,
And bore him to the house; and then dispersed
With money for their hunger and their thirst.

Alan lay still unconscious; months of toil,
And care, and grief, had done their work by stealth;
The mental and the physical turmoil,
The evil deeds of poverty and wealth,
The city's filth and crime, that could not soil
His spirit, drained away his body's health:
"But he will live!" cried Ella, fain to grope
For light. The surgeon said, "There still is hope."

"There still is hope." Thus sounds the first low note,
The first faint tremor of the passing bell!
"There still is hope." The dread that loomed remote
Draws near; the poison-pang we sought to quell
Stings sharper for this futile antidote:
So heavy on her ears the comfort fell—
"There still is hope." She watched his sighing breath,
Feeling herself the very pains of death.

VI.

Ella kept anxious vigil by the bed :
How strange it is to watch through creeping hours
A face which was Thought's temple, and instead
To find blank nothingness, or jarring powers ;
For mind, and soul, and senses, all are fled,
And weirdly wander in a world not ours,
Some Tartarus, whereof we seek the key,
Striving to follow and to set them free.

Ere night, there came a change ; for Alan woke
From torpor to delirium ; now he seemed
To see again his Vision, and invoke
With prayer, some Power divine ; anon, he dreamed
Of his old home and his old faith, and broke
Into sad cries of "Mother!" and there streamed
From his hot lips full many a wonder wild
Of elves, and wraiths, and witches who beguiled

The hearts of chieftains. Then he wandered back
From childish days, and softly moaned the name
Of Ella; or he trod his wonted track
'Mid squalor and disease, and vice and shame,
Crying, "I cannot eat while others lack,
I eat their flesh!" But still again he came
To that old home, and raved with strange despair
Because he could not find his mother there.

And Ella listened; these lamentings moved
Her inmost heart; her sorrowing eyes grew dim
With bitterer tears—this woman she had loved,
Tenderly loved, when first betrothed to him,
But, at the severance, haply it behoved
A prophet's mother to resent the whim
That harmed her idol; and the two, estranged,
For many months no greeting word had changed.

And who would tell the mother? She must come;
But who would say to her—"Your son is lying
Wounded to death—he wakes from swoonings dumb
To rave and moan—perchance he may be dying
E'en while I speak." Poor Ella, cold and numb,
Pondered of this, and felt her heart replying—
"You, you must bear the message—only you
Have wrecked his life—take anguish as your due."

As thus she mused, George entered. "Go awhile,"
He said, "and sleep, for you are tired and worn,
And I will watch." She gave a faint wan smile
At thought of sleep, with this envenomed thorn
Deep in her breast—better the weary mile
To Alan's home—better to greet the morn
With wakeful eyes, than half to see its beams
In the sad Limbo of unslumbrous dreams.

But forth she went; and loitering at the gate
She saw that stalwart limping rioter
Who championed Alan 'gainst the blinded hate
Of the brute mob. No tumult was astir,
But only this one man had come to wait
For news. In whispering tones he questioned her,
As though a louder sound the ear might reach
Of him who heard but his own babbling speech.

And when she told her errand, he besought
That he might guide her through the darkening streets,
For some of those who swore and robbed and fought
That morning, were not sated with their feats;
He had no fear—*he* never would be caught
By any slow policeman on his beats,
She would be safe with him—for well enough
His face was known to every city rough.

So, with her strange companion, Ella wound
Through many streets, with foot that could not tire,
And scarcely saw the wrecks that lay around,
The havoc wrought by pillage and by fire ;
Nor did her speed grow slack, until she found
Her goal ; and then, refusing gift or hire,
Her guide departed ; timidly she knocked,
And a slow trembling hand the door unlocked.

And Ella stepped into the homely room
Where, two years past, Alan his Vision told ;
There, sitting upright in the fire-lit gloom,
Was the grey father, stern yet unconsoled,
Still mourning for his son's eternal doom :
The careworn mother, thinner than of old,
Flitted from spot to spot, or crouching sate
Like a poor bird with nest made desolate.

I know not how the story was begun,
Nor ended how ; the father's face, hard-set,
Just quivered—" Lord," he said, " Thy will be done ! "
But with reluctant tears his eyes grew wet,
Oozing like drops of blood—" My son, my son ! "
He murmured, seeming all things to forget
Save sorrow ; but the mother, pallid, fierce,
Gazed at the girl, as though she fain would pierce

Her heart. "Your fault!" she cried—"it is your fault!
His blood be on your head, if he must die;
Like the proud Pharisees, who did exalt
Their barren lore, and shouted 'Crucify!'
You slew my son!" But now the tear-drops salt
Choked her mad words; and Ella made reply
By kneeling at her feet, and weeping—"Nay,
Mother! it was myself I meant to slay."

She kissed the slender hand, by toil made hard,
And the poor mother, seeing her so mild,
And feeling the hot tears, her heart unbarred
With quick repentance for those plainings wild;
Saying—"Forgive me—kiss me—I should guard
My lips from evil. Take me to my child."
The women clung together; then the three
Set out on their sad errand silently.

They neared the house with many a wordless prayer,
And knew not whether that they came to seek
Were life or death: George met them on the stair
With mien so haggard, that it seemed to speak
All that they dreaded; but he said, "Prepare
To see him—he is conscious, but as weak
As any babe, and his unceasing cry
Is 'Let my mother come before I die!'"

And the two parents, by his tone bereft
Well-nigh of hope, passed to the sick man's side ;
While Ella in her loneliness was left
Waiting without, uncalled. Should Death divide
Their hearts for ever, leaving still the cleft
Between his soul and hers unbridged and wide ?
She lingered ; oft against her will she heard
The tender sighing of a farewell word.

Was there for *her* no longing and no call,
Not even one poor good-bye message, sent
Like ears of corn that careless hands let fall
For one who gleans—was this her punishment ?
Was parting not enough, without the gall
Of this immedicable pain, unblent
With joy, and stinging backward, till at last
It should empoison all the sacred Past ?

But now the two came out to her ; their tears
Were dried, and in their faces there was calm ;
The father seemed as one who dimly hears
The music of some new revealing psalm ;
The mother, past all hopes and past all fears
And memories of anger, with cold palm
Pressed Ella's hand—"Go in," she said, "be brave,
He loves you now—yes, even to the grave."

He loved her—then the utmost bitterness
Was gone from pain, leaving remembered joy
Unsullied—happy they who still possess
Gladness in grief embalmed, that cannot cloy
With full fruition, nor by time grow less,
Nor can estrangement any more destroy
This Love ideal: thus doth Heaven accord
Through Death, its one immutable reward.

She went in softly; he lay white and still,
Though his dark eyes unquenched were burning clear;
She laid her hand in his, already chill,
And heard his faint voice whisper, "Dear, more dear
In death—forgive me, Ella, and fulfil
My last petition, for the end is near,
Is close; oh stay, and hold awhile my hand,
And listen—only *you* will understand.

"Stay with me, while I linger on the verge
Of the unknown abyss, yet void of awe
And fear, and ecstasy; I hear a dirge
Wailing that Vision which of old I saw;
Yet not in darkness but in glory merge
My dreams, and yield to some transcendent Law,
I know not how; for all is plunged and drowned
In the bright waters of this peace profound.

"But that my eyesight wanes, now might I see;
But that my thoughts grow dim, at last might learn;
But that sleep weighs me down so wearily,
Rise to that Truth, for whose pure light I yearn:
Unworshipped on her mount she dwells, in free
And maiden loneliness; her wooers turn
Toward fair reflected images, that gleam
And waver with the mist or with the stream.

"I cannot think, and scarcely can I feel—
But you are strong, and now again you shine
Truth's radiant herald, come to wound and heal
A generation hungry for a sign—
Be no sign granted, saving to unseal
The meaning of the ages, and unshrine
All errors, all illusions—theirs, my own:
For though the wine-press that I trod alone

"Held blood-red grapes from the volcano's edge,
Yet the true purple full-ripe fruit I missed:
Seek you and find; oh give this one last pledge—
Ella, my Love—my Wife!" His lips she kissed
With tender lingering pressure: sacrilege
It seemed, to mar that silent Eucharist
By uttered vow; the very soul of each
Shone visible, disrobed of veiling speech.

Grieve not for them; but rather grieve for such
As live with what they love, and night and noon
Have joy of gentle voice and kindly touch,
Yet famish for some unimagined boon;
Too little Heaven they have, and all too much
Of Earth, whose bounties deaden, late or soon
Their aspiration; or its torrent-force
Frays out some fleshly or ethereal course.

For such your grief; what husbands and their wives
Once in long years each other's soul can see?
But these found all to which high Passion strives—
Perfect communion, from cold symbols free,
The fleeting quintessence of myriad lives,
A concentrated brief Eternity,
The mountain-vista of an endless age
Not known by weary winding pilgrimage.

At length she spoke—"Myself I dedicate
To this great service: all my spirit's power—
Through joy and grief, in good or evil fate,
Whether the desert pathways bud and flower,
Or the fair fields be ravaged by man's hate—
Shall bear the superscription of this hour:
I give whate'er I have of strength and skill;
Trust me in this—what Woman can, I will."

Then she was silent: for his look was fraught
With peace that quenches all desire and dread,
Yet spares the impress of each noble thought
That ruled in life the converse of the dead;
As Night brings every trivial thing to nought,
While still the mountains tower, the oceans spread:
Long time she knelt; and when at last she rose
Her features almost mirrored his repose.

THE ELIXIR OF LIFE.

THE ELIXIR OF LIFE.

I.

In some strange waking vision I beheld
A man and woman in their summer prime,
Who seemed memorial forms of classic eld,
And yet the fairest, newest births of Time ;
My heart they rapt, my questionings they quelled :
But now I bid my plain ungilded rhyme
Repeat the marvels that I saw and heard
Vivid in colour and distinct in word.

The man was such as Grecian sculptors took
For model of a god ; he well might cope
With any deity who ever shook
The lance or lyre ; he seemed incarnate Hope :
And there was joyous foresight in his look,
As though the Present were a telescope
Through which appeared the Future's nebulous haze
Clear sky, with constellated suns ablaze.

Yet, gazing in his dark unfathomed eyes,
You might behold long mournful ages pass,
Each laying down a load of mysteries
Solved by his mind ; you saw, as in a glass,
Your own thoughts and the world's thoughts, mad or wise,
Fleet, ever adding to the winnowed mass ;
As though Apollo, King of laughing Hours,
With Time's old scythe should reap the grass and flowers.

Tall was the woman ; beautiful and lithe,
Filled full of life in eye, and lip, and hair,
Whose coils like dull-gold serpents seemed to writhe
About her royal forehead broad and fair ;
Her sapphire eyes were bright, their glance was blithe,
Yet if you caught it sideways, unaware,
Now and again, behind the lustre glad
Floated a shade, half cynic and half sad.

One moment she would seem an angel, fresh
From Heaven, and bringing joyful news to man ;
The next, a shuddering hint of World and Flesh
And Devil, swiftly through your senses ran ;
But then her eyes and voice would quite enmesh
Your soul, and you could neither bless nor ban—
Happy, if ere the Siren's isle you passed
Your Fate had lashed you safely to the mast !

Together in a frescoed hall they sate,
Storied with pictures fair of many lands :
Old Rome, and sad Palmyra desolate,
And Alpine summits, and Arabian sands ;
Fair ladies rode with knights inamorate,
And little children played in merry bands ;
But not a group so bright was painted there
That it might shadow forth the living pair.

He held her hand, yet seemed to wander through
Long years of thought ; till she the silence broke,
And made of her soft voice a silken clue
To guide him back ; these gentle words she spoke—
" Dearest, this day you promised to endue
My heart with mirth celestial, and evoke
Visions of joy, whose glories should prevail
O'er all the marvels of Arabian tale."

Light was her tone ; but he, with accent grave,
Said—" Hear me, Marah ! In my power I keep
A boon more precious than you hope or crave,
Or even dream in waking or in sleep ;
Such bridal gift as no man ever gave
To his fair Empress ; a delight as deep
E'en as our love, which ne'er shall fade and flee
Like pallid loves of weak mortality.

"Nay, start not, shrink not! Ages have gone by
Since in a slumbrous German town I dwelt,
And from my jutting gable saw the sky
Narrowed but clear; there did my childhood melt
In fires of youth; and every day more high
Ran my life's rushing stream, until I felt
That never must chill Death the torrent freeze,
But it must spread and foam in boundless seas.

"Life, dear Life, human Life! for this I prayed—
To be a goblet filled up to the brim
With Life's rich wine; not an ethereal shade,
A naked spirit passionless and dim,
But perfect Man, imperishably made,
With Immortality in heart and limb,
And brain whose orbëd empire might suffice
To hold the World and make it Paradise.

"Thus hoping, searching, in alchemic toil
I spent the hours of my poor mortal day,
Till Time took youth and vigour as a spoil,
And bent my frame, and made my temples grey:
Yet still I watched my costly potions boil,
And with strange herbs and metals did assay
To win, and ever hold in bridal clasp
The Life that flitting mocked my palsied grasp.

" But daily farther from the goal I swerved ;
Sight left my eyes, and skill my fingers lean :
' Sweet Life '—I cried—' for whom I long have served,
Whose glorious beauty I from far have seen,
Not such reward thy votary deserved,
Not this thy warrior's guerdon should have been—
At last, at last, thy full fruition give,
Let me not die, ere I have learned to live !

" ' Yet if thy renovating touch divine
Too late, too late, be laid on these grey hairs,
I conquer still, though strength should not be mine
To drink the cup my dying hand prepares ;
Myself, but not my triumph, I resign,
For all mankind shall be my deathless heirs :
I, friendless, childless, poor, will yet bequeathe
One boon—Eternity for all who breathe ! '

" That night, with aching eyes and weary brain
Over a seething flask I sadly hung,
And the last precious drops that I could strain
From my necessities, therein I flung,
Half-fearing 'twere a senile fancy vain
That one so worn and wrinkled could grow young :
Suddenly, strangely, the thick wizard-broth
Foamed upward in my face with amber froth.

"It fell—and bright the liquid grew and pure
Like molten topaz; and a perfume rose
Whose sweetness might a Moslem saint allure
To drink damnation with his Prophet's foes:
Scarce could my soul this lightning-hope endure,
My knees were fain to yield, my eyes to close:
I stretched a hand, blind-groping, as I sank
Gasping for breath, and reached the flask, and drank.

"A miracle! my sight, but now half-quenched,
Pierced through the gloom, and made the lamplight clear;
I felt my forehead, with deep cares entrenched,
Grow smooth, and many a sorrow-laden year
Roll like a mist away; the limbs that blenched
Were buoyant, and the heart that quaked with fear
Now sang exultantly, in youth renewed,
And strength to bear its own beatitude.

"I dashed the flask to earth with joyous hand—
'Life, human Life, these drops to thee!' I cried:
I ran and leaped; I felt my soul expand
Till all its pettier hopes were glorified
To a great longing that the Earth should stand
Arrayed in Immortality, a bride,
Wedded to Heaven, not as a beggar-wife,
But bringing her own dower of boundless life.

"And those bright drops that on the floor I threw
In the exuberant lavishness of health
Brought forth, by magic of their golden dew,
All tints, and shapes, and substances of wealth;
A glorious sculptured palace round me grew,
Whose mystic builders wrought unseen, by stealth;
Frescoes there were and statues, gold and gems,
And sceptres, and Imperial diadems.

"Yet all these marvels were but promises
And gracious foretastes of a world unknown;
I must go forth, a happier Heracles,
With hydra-headed Death to strive alone,
Fill with new wine all poisoned chalices,
Anoint all wounds; revengeful Time dethrone,
Crowning and sceptring in his stead at last
A perfect Present, that should ne'er be Past.

"I sought the mother-land of many hopes—
Land of the sun, whose summer rays illume
Blue lakes, engarlanded by golden slopes,
And valleys dim with amethystine bloom;
The wondrous land of scholars, painters, Popes,
The Church's cradle, and the Empire's tomb:
Dear land, my promised Canaan of delights,
Peopled, alas, by soft-tongued Canaanites.

"I knew fair Florence in her noon-day glow
And in her late repentance and remorse;
Saw the first joy of Michel Angelo
When great Lorenzo marked his budding force,
And pacing at Careggi to and fro
Heard silver-voiced Mirandola discourse,
Though from San Marco thrilled a note of fear—
'Repent, repent! the sword of God is here!'

"And then I entered those Imperial walls
Where every epoch finds its magnet-pole,
And watched the great Cathedral's domëd halls
Rise, and Life's yellow Tiber-current roll,
And heard wise Leo and his Cardinals
Wittily prate of God and of the Soul,
Or lightly mock, as Teuton ravings drunk,
The thundering theses of the rebel monk.

"But I beheld a black abyss of lust
And hatred yawn beneath Italia's prime—
Groaning I said, 'Where is a man so just,
So wise, that he should live beyond his time?
What poet, priest, or woman can I trust
To use in righteousness my gift sublime?
Or shall I aid the crude one-sided plan
Of friar Augustine or Dominican?'

"And so I kept my boon, and sought anew
For one to share it. Now in tranquil seas
I coasted, where they lap with waters blue
The white or ruddy sands; with westward breeze
I sailed, that proud Iberian land to view
Made Empress by the ill-starred Genoese,
Fain to rule Europe, as she ruled her slaves
In diamond mines beyond Atlantic waves.

"But here, 'mid wealth and courtesy and pride
Methought the vale of Hinnom ever burned,
There tender maids and youths in torture died,
Parents and children, sages, hinds unlearned,
Who all with blind heroic faith defied
Faith blindly tyrannous; heartsore I turned
From the grim King, who seemed what proverbs tell
Of his Madrid—'half winter and half hell.'

"Now to the valiant island, which that King
Had thought to win with mightiest armament:
There gladsomely I heard at heaven's gate sing
Blithe birds of morn; and though the song was blent
With notes unworthy so divine a spring,
A thrill of joy through all my frame it sent:
But not in city or in court I stayed,
Nor joined the wooers of the Royal Maid.

"It was a midland village that I sought,
Where daisy-banked a placid river ran
Past a grey church, and near it dwelt and wrought
A bard whose god-like eyes the heart could scan,
Telling its dreams and humours; but I thought—
'Nay, let the Poet live, and leave the Man
To die in peace; he quaffs his own rich wine
Of Immortality—what needs he mine?'

"Again I roamed; in European wars
I strove, and saw the great Gustavus fall,
In the red carnage that my soul abhors
Mingled, that I might know and suffer all,
Warring, with vanquished or with conquerors,
O'er burning home and shattered city-wall,
Till peace returned—then, tired in heart and hand
I sought the visions of the Morning Land.

"And first I pilgrimed to the Holy Grave
Where fought of old the flower of Europe's might—
For the benignant Prince of Peace, who gave
Not peace, but sword and fire, long raged the fight:
There now divided Christians scowl and rave,
Armenian, Latin, Greek, and Maronite:
Loathing I left them; then o'er sand and foam
Passed to an elder worship's dreamful home.

"Often at night I heard the lion's roaring
From the wild jungles of some pathless wood;
I saw the zonëd Himalayas soaring
To Arctic heights; and sought a brotherhood
Not found in age-long roving and exploring,
Among the saints of Brahma and of Buddh:
But no fit sharer of a lofty fate
Rose from that primal race degenerate.

"Two human lifetimes, alien from the West
I roved; then turning, found all Europe lit
With war—with strange convulsions sore distressed;
And that fair feminine city of keen wit
Which made of Earth and Heaven a graceful jest
Read her own doom in ruddy lightnings writ—
'Summed, weighed, found wanting, rent:' her King was slain,
Her Queen, her nobles, that the crushed might reign.

"It was the hey-day of that cursëd spawn
Of rebels, bred and schooled by Tyranny,
That dyed them through and through, and now withdrawn
Left them indeed unsovereigned, but not free:
And yet it was the drear and blood-red dawn
Of a new hope for sad Humanity:
I watched a fresh enthusiasm's birth,
Not for high Heaven, but for the suffering Earth.

"I knew the man who touched the secret nerve
Of Gallic life, and thrilled it as he would;
One of those meteor-minds, which never swerve,
But dash straight down to their selected good,
Not orbing in a planet's constant curve,
Nor comet-soaring through infinitude,
But flashing for a moment, earthward hurled,
The iron fragment of some starry world.

"Then sailed I West, to that Republic free
Which bravely to old Britain bade defiance;
I saw how Christians fostered slavery,
How Freedom with Corruption made alliance;
And thence returned, to give unrestingly
One life to Metaphysics, one to Science,
And one to Politics, that I might know
The varied springs of human weal and woe.

"Now am I made the King of this fair State,
Which I will rule as mortal man rules not;
My gathered wisdom will I dedicate
To general concord, of just laws begot;
Then Paradise shall blossom new-create,
Not marred by any fraudful serpent-plot,
And Truth and Right the human soul uplift,
Till men be worthy of my glorious gift.

" While still I roamed, my heart I shut and sealed
Against all passionate love; yet oftentimes
When dark Italian orbs their light revealed,
Or the blue eyes besung in Northern rhymes
Glanced coyly, almost would my spirit yield;
As though the sure-foot mountaineer who climbs
Some Alpine crag, should loiter on the brink
To pluck the gentian or the mountain pink.

" But in a myriad women, none I found
So filled and flushed with Life's exuberant tide
That through uncounted ages it could bound
And ne'er grow stagnant, weak, or satisfied;
No joy so rich and vital, that undrowned
On the broad flood in triumph it could ride:
How should a fragile creature, fashioned fair
For her brief hour, my endless being share?

" But now I have my kingdom and have you
Gloriously framed for an immortal fate,
Almost that regal beauty might subdue
Grim Death, and his predestined hour undate:
Sing and exult! for we the World make new,
Our dual Star all trancëd hopes await;
The Future is our own—who will may claim
The unregretted Past, of deathful fame.

"And you to-night, this very night, shall drink
Immortal Life." He ceased, and fixed on her
That look, where all the æons seemed to sink
In one bright Now; but did my senses err,
Or did I see her for an instant shrink
Before she answered, "Dearest harbinger
Of gladness!" with a smile so softly bright
That I believed it in my own despite.

II.

The Vision changed. And now I saw the Queen
In a fair garden loiter; at her side
Was one of stalwart frame and princely mien,
His dark eyes bright with passion and with pride,
Yet not her lord. They reached an arbour green,
Blossomed with roses, and o'er-canopied
With bowering trees; nor marked amid the shade
A slim shape rustle, like a Dryad-maid.

Marah was speaking, "'Tis a wondrous tale!
He has the true Elixir—deems me fit
To share it. Marvel not that I am pale!
Oh weary fancy, nevermore to quit
His side, but while the ages drag and trail
In his Elysian theatre to sit,
Or act in dramas classic and sublime
Until I almost long for pantomime!

"I could have loved him; but he is a god,
And I am not a goddess or a saint;
For twenty generations he has trod
This evil earth, seeing through rags and paint
To its vile heart; and now he bids me plod
With him for slow millennia: sooth, 'tis quaint
That *I* am chosen by this clear-eyed sage
His Empress, and ensample to the Age!

"I'd worship him, if he were carved in marble,
And every morning I could come and kneel
Before his sacred shrine, and softly warble
The shivering adoration that I feel,
Nor need his philanthropic Law to garble
With any gloss of selfish woe or weal;
Then could I yield, like pious Christians many,
The pound to Cæsar, and to God the penny.

"At first, indeed, 'twas sweet and wonderful
To feel my spirit floating, cradled soft
As on some eagle's wings, who left the dull,
Stale, petty world, and as he soared aloft
Seemed all my meaner longings to annul;
But after journeying sunward long and oft
I hunger and grow faint; the naked glare
Is too intense, the atmosphere too rare.

" I have not sinned—not yet—but I am weary
Of all the glories of these ether-flights,
I'm tired of listening to the concert sphery,
Dizzy with gazing from Olympian heights :
Dear mortal planet, unideal, cheery,
Oh give me back thy motley-hued delights—
Give me, for solemn-chanting sun and moon,
A gas-lit ball-room, and a lilting tune !

" I love my life ; and yet a Life Eternal
Is something far too serious and too vast :
'Twere well, I own, to keep one's beauty vernal,
But even vanity might pall at last;
Better to tempt at once the Powers Infernal
Than with an ever-young enthusiast
Live for Humanity, its evils probe,
And like old Atlas, hoist the ponderous globe.

" But he will test me—find me out some day,
And know with what delusive light I shone ;
Then will he bid me in his lordly way
With just a touch of sorrow—' Hence—begone ! '
Or else will strip the gauzy wings so gay
From his poor worthless weak ephemeron :
Cruel it were, the fire-fly's life to mar,
Because it is an insect, not a star !

"Hear me, good Hubert! yet you are not good—
He is a whole infinitude above
Your noblest; I were happy, if I could
Cleave to him, wed his thought, his virtues prove;
Were I the archetype of womanhood
As he of manhood, then we two might love;
Then should I deem your passion, at the best,
But a dull fable, or a sorry jest.

"Nay, Hubert, do not frown! I like you well;
I am a woman of the world, you know,
Too tired by far to rave about the spell
Of mutual love, and tremblingly to glow
With girlish raptures; but to you I tell
My thoughts and wishes, be they high or low—
That frown again—oh free me from this bond,
Then shall you find me sweet, caressing, fond!

"Oh set me free! bear me away, away,
To cold Kamschatka or to burning Ind—
If you should shrink or fail, I needs must pray
Some ocean current or some rushing wind
To take me—I am mean, and must obey
My own mean heart; the boast—'I have not sinned,'
Was vain; for sinned I have in wish and thought—
Cares Conscience in what stuff the sin is wrought?"

He clasped her close. "Fair Queen of my desire,
Flower of all loveliness! I do your will
Because it is my own, with heart on fire—
But from the plan is one thing lacking still;
For *we* two, sweetest Marah, could not tire,
And in millennia could not take our fill
Of joyance—we should gaily revel on,
And wondering cry—'Another cycle gone!'

"Short life is all a mocking game of chance;
Years are the counters—one by one we lose
And soon grow bankrupt—lucky Circumstance
Comes late, and we its blandishments refuse
Because we are too old to sing or dance,
Love we forget, and wealth we cannot use:
Man stakes his all upon a single cast—
Give him a myriad, and he wins at last.

"Then let us of that magic wine partake
This night, and fathom all the depths of pleasure,
And live without satiety or ache
Our feastful days, that Time forgets to measure:
How shall we cheat this chemist-King, and make
Ourselves possessors of his liquid treasure?
His servants love him; vainly should we try
With stores of gold the loyal fools to buy.

"But I will give you a prepotent draught
To set before your deathless lord to-night,
Saying—'Come, pledge me! not till you have quaffed
This cup, I taste of your Elixir's might!'
So shall we capture life and love by craft,
For as he drinks, he will be reft of sight,
Hearing, and thought, by slumber—you are free!
Then quick! the goblet seize, and haste to me

"That we may drink deep, deep, of boundless bliss"—
But she—"It is not poison?" faintly asked—
"To poison he is mortal—spare me this!"
Lord Hubert turned aside; the fiend unmasked
Glared from his face; but soon with tender kiss
Again his power of smooth deceit he tasked,
Saying—"This potion does not harm, but cures—
I would not hurt a hound that had been yours!"

The foliage shook; they saw a light shape spring,
And toward the palace dart. "We are betrayed,"
Cried Marah, "hastes she not to warn the King?
Prate, ready tongue!—a ready hand had stayed
Her flight. I know her—heard her carolling
That foolish story of the beggar-maid
And King Cophetua, long ere I was doomed
To life, and in immortal love entombed."

Leaving the guilty pair in their dismay
My dream pursued the maiden's flying feet;
Fragile she was, and slender as a fay,
Fair streamed her tresses as she glided fleet,
Her white robe flashed—she sped with no delay
Till at the gate I heard her voice entreat
That she might see her sovereign, kind to grant
The prayers of many a humble suppliant.

They led her where he sate; then, cowering low,
She said—"My liege, I oft have made your sport—
You know me not, perchance—how should you know
A simple singing-maiden of your court?
I would not seek you for my private woe,
But I have that to tell which would extort
Language, though I were dumb, and give me breath
For warning speech, though cold I lay in death."

She faltered—then at once she oped the sluice
Of words and tears, and told the plot accurst,
Adding at last, in weeping self-excuse—
"I had not stayed to listen, but the first
Word of the Queen foreshadowed some abuse
Of your deep love—must I not learn the worst,
And fly to save my monarch from the snare?
Trust me, oh King! I have no other prayer."

But he abashed her with a searching look—
"You have an honest face," he said, "but sure
A most deceiving fancy; you mistook
Faces or meanings. Nay! I am secure—
Go, foolish damsel, to your singing-book!
Hubert I trust not, but the Queen is pure—
Pure as the radiant ether. She shall come
And speak her innocence, and strike you dumb."

He said and smiled; then to the Queen he sent
Praying her presence. Marah came, with lips
Pale but firm-set, and haughty eyes that meant
To look unchanged on glory or eclipse;
But when she saw her lord, that bold intent
Slipped from her, like the outworn slough that slips
From a snake's body; and forgetting pride
She fell before him. "I have sinned," she cried,

"And am not worthy to be called your wife—
No, nor your slave! That coward in will and deed,
Whose false lips bade me steal your cup of life,
Has fled, and basely left me at my need,
A double traitor. Let the vengeful knife
End my despair—nay, rather will I plead
That you, so merciful, will grant me time
For penitence—perchance forgive my crime

At last, and—dare I think it?—in the end
Take back the woman whom you justly spurned,
To be—ah not your wife—but yet your friend,
Long hence, when all my follies are unlearned:
Oh, by the love you bore me, hear and bend,
And pardon!" But from that fair form he turned
As from some loathly creature misbegot—
Crying—"Nay, woman! of my love speak not—

"What I loved *is* not, and has never been,
It dies where it was born—in my own heart;
Yours are the form, the features, and the mien,
As Hell may hold a seraph's counterpart:
But I reproach you not; I should have seen,
I should have better known the Siren's art:
Shall not the sage Physician's blame be mute
When *he* has pressed for wine the poison-fruit?

"You were to me a light illusive ghost,
Not living flesh: as though a man should find
Some portrait fair, and foolishly should boast
That he in eyes and lips can read the mind,
And know the heart's recesses innermost,
And so should give himself with passion blind
To a mere phantom—worshipping perchance
The painter's flattery of a harlot's glance.

"You loved your life—the life you understood:
No man but prizes that which he may call
His life, and lightly names that primal good
In common phrase, and symbols read by all,
Yet new translated by each alien mood:
The freeman speaks one language with the thrall,
And yet the simplest words of love and hate
Passing from one to other, shed their freight.

"Calm is my speech, because my heart is cold,
Cold, cold, by you fast frozen. Go your way—
For when that luring fairness I behold,
And hear the voice, well-loved but yesterday,
I feel as when I grew infirm and old,
And Life fled from me with a mocking Nay:
Go, Marah—soul and body you bereave
Of Youth, and only Age's heart-ache leave."

"Marah!" She seemed to shudder at the name:
Perchance some tardy touch of penitence
Or late-awakening love, had stirred her frame,
Deep-thrilling till it pricked the inward sense;
Trembling she rose, and hung her head in shame
As though her beauty mirrored her offence;
Then forth she went, with slow uncertain pace,
And hands that strove to hide her drooping face.

Now the pale singing-maiden dared to draw
Near to the King, till at his feet she knelt,
But silently she gazed, held back by awe
From murmuring or from chanting what she felt;
And when the timid upturned look he saw
Gently he spoke—"Fear not—for you have dealt
Wisely and loyally; you shall not lose
Your recompense." But she replied—"I choose

"No thanks, or else an infinite reward—
Make me immortal! not that life is sweet,
But should your grace this sovereign boon accord
I may learn wisdom, sitting at your feet;
Till haply, in a myriad years, my Lord
Might deem me worthy—but it is not meet
To babble thus." That shame was in her cheeks,
Which, striving to be secret, plainlier speaks.

He laid a pitying hand upon her head—
"Peace, gentle child! You know not what you seek;
Calm is the grave, and restful are the dead,
But Life is rude, and tempest-tost, and bleak,
And you will tire, ere threescore years have sped:
Your nature is too womanly and weak
To drink my cup, or watch one age with me
In the World's garden of Gethsemane."

Then she too stole away, and he was left
In darkness and alone. I thought he strove
To disentangle all the ravelled weft
Of wrath and weariness, and scorn and love;
At first like the unquiet shade, long reft
Of hope, who paces some Tartarean grove:
But when he spoke, his voice, though sad, untuned,
Told not of an immedicable wound.

"Marah! with mind that might have soared beyond
The highest Heaven of woman, yet was bent
Even to Hell! was it for you I conned
The World—an age to every lineament?
If I were mortal, now must I despond,
Or from despair step downward to content:
But he whose portion is perpetual youth
May watch and fail, and still have time for Truth.

"Love shrivels to black dust, but leaves alive
Duty and Hope. When not a flower remains
Unblighted, still the leafy boughs survive,
And still the sap is mounting in their veins;
No more, no more, my lonely life shall strive
To put forth blossoms, nurturing canker-stains;
Yet shall the tree aspire, and gather might
By broader foliage from a clearer light.

" Too late, too late ! such dolorous cry was mine,
Such words my doubting spirit sighed of yore ;
They are the brand of death—the fatal sign
Proving wise man, with all his dear-bought lore
Of evil and of good, not yet divine :
'Too late, too late ! ' I know the words no more—
' Live and prevail ! ' is written in their stead,
In golden letters for their sanguined red.

" Death, living death ! thou canst not bid me grieve
Eternally, because a woman's lip
Was beautiful and cunning to deceive :
Now, since nor love is mine nor fellowship,
More gloriously my life I will enweave
With general gladness, and for ever strip
My soul of passion ; even as the Sun
Lavishes glowing heat, but garners none.

" All private hope is frail and fugitive,
Dead if it miss or if it reach its goal ;
There is one way of peace, but one—to live
The universal Life ; to make the whole
Of Nature mine ; to feel the laws which give
Form to her Being, sovereign in my soul :
By this one road, enfranchisement I gain
From the heart-stifling narrowness of pain.

"Thus I exalt this anguish finely-nerved
To poignant thought and aspiration keen:
Oh Life, stern Life, for whom in woe I served,
Whose veilëd beauty I so long have seen,
If such reward thy votary deserved,
If this thy warrior's guerdon should have been,
At last, at last, be perfect bounty shown,
And all thy pulses vibrate in my own!

"Come to me, come to me, from sea and star!
From all thy homes, from all thy fountains, come!
Oh let me feel thy throbbings near and far,
And give full utterance to thy voices dumb:
Make me thy true, thy radiant Avatar,
And in my action concentrate the sum
Of thy unseen endeavours; let its plan
Image the secret destiny of Man.

"Surely thy end and meaning is not loss,
Surely thou workest to some joy untold;
Some Book of Life there is, not writ across
With runes of woe and dirges manifold;
Some fire thou hast, to purge away the dross
Of Death, deep grainëd in thy purest gold:
From all things save the quintessence of Thee—
From Hate, from Love—oh Life, deliver me!"

Then was he silent; in that human breast
Immortal, sorrow seemed at war with thought;
The tears burst forth: like the empoisoned vest
Of Jove-born Heracles, remembrance wrought:
Fainter, more distant, grew the murmurs pressed
From that heroic heart; my Vision, fraught
With marvels, faded, and a chilly stream
Of work-day light poured in and quenched the dream.

THE STORY OF CLARICE.

THE STORY OF CLARICE.

I.

In an old house, wind-haunted, bare, and grim,
Fair Clarice and her father lived alone
With books for comrades; books were slaves to him,
But friends to her; among them she had grown
For well-nigh twenty summers; though the sage
Who gave her being, scarcely knew her age.

Like a wise pedlar, vending where he can
A ribbon, a gilt pin, a crystal bead,
That yellow, smoke-dried, literary man
Wrote books that all might quote, though none would read:
He raked the dust-heaps of the Court of France,
And left his daughter to herself—and Chance.

But she, in virgin majesty serene,
Whom few had dared to love, and none to woo,
Wore learning as a long-descended queen
Her robes and crown doth royally endue;
As though what others con with aching head
This maiden knew by right inherited.

Stately, with clear grey eyes and flaxen hair,
She might have seemed Athene, wise and chaste,
Save that no lofty helmet she did wear,
Nor ægis buckled to her slender waist;
Nor could she teach what worldly snares to shun,
As the great Goddess taught Ulysses' son.

Grave was her mouth, and yet was formed for smiles;
Pale were her cheeks—how lovely, had they blushed!
No sweet gay looks were hers, no girlish wiles:
Not that her woman's instincts had been crushed;
But, like azaleas in a darkened room,
They had not air and light enough to bloom.

I said the maid was left to Chance—'tis true—
But that Divinity has divers shapes;
Now, she appears an apple rich of hue,
Eve's fruit or Discord's—now, the juice of grapes,
Promising mirth—now, a fair human form,
With tender words, and sighs, and love-looks warm.

She came to Clarice as a scholar young,
The secretary of her pedant sire;
Gentle of mien and eloquent of tongue
He spoke with something of a poet's fire:
Well might accomplished Wilfred hope to gain
The maiden's guileless heart and book-learn'd brain.

His mind was all o'ergrown with metaphor,
With tropes that simulate and stifle thought;
Right glibly could he wage a wordy war,
Skilled in debate, not lightly tripped or caught:
Yet oft with her he faltered and grew hoarse,
And lost the gilded thread of his discourse.

His face—in sooth, it was a handsome face,
Quick to express whate'er he dreamed or felt;
His dark eyes glowed with all-subduing grace,
Sure of their power to brighten, kindle, melt:
Yet Wilfred's practised heart poor Clarice stole,
And reigned unconscious tyrant of his soul.

For, spite of all her wisdom, she was still
So calm, so child-like, and so marble-cold,
She did not know he loved her, nor had skill
To read in looks what no sweet words had told:
Though tales of love her spirit oft could reach
Like distant warblings in a foreign speech.

She knew the woes of Dido; she could tell
How Helen set the towers of Troy ablaze:
She thought of Love as a forgotten spell,
Potent in far-off lands, in ancient days;
Obsolete now, like Magic black and white,
Or the Emission Theory of Light.

But once she prayed the youth, his day's work done,
To read, and she would listen : with fresh hopes
He took the philosophic malison
Of Schopenhauer, king of misanthropes,
And chose the chapter where a sunny mist
Floats o'er the pages of the Pessimist.

For there, in mildest mood, he tells how Art
Reveals the pure Idea, soothes desire,
Sets free the mind, and heals the aching heart ;
But chief he vaunts the magic of the lyre—
Sweet peace and tranquil ecstasy it gives,
And breathes the inmost life of all that lives.

So rapt was queenly Clarice, so intent
On Wilfred's voice, he could not meet her look ;
Its very chillness fired him—on he went,
Halting and stammering—then flung down the book
And spoke and gazed as every man, not dunce
Or icicle, has gazed and spoken once.

"Too long have I stood blindfold on the brink
Of Heaven or Hell ; and now I dare at length
To pray for sight—I scarce can speak or think
Because with all my soul and all my strength
And all my life I love you—Clarice, hear !"
And his voice quivered with a passionate fear.

Oh gentle heart that could not understand!
Oh cruel calm in wondering childlike eyes!
She let him clasp her unresponsive hand,
And froze him with her innocent surprise—
Then plucked her hand away, cut short his prayer,
Fled from the room, and left him planted there.

Blankly he stood; one miserable course
Alone remained—to take his hat, and go—
Though still he kept the lover's sad resource,
To rail on the cold heart that made his woe,
And switch with savage cane the wayside flower,
And curse himself, and Fate, and Schopenhauer.

II.

Clarice awoke next morning with the sense
That something she had found, and something lost;
A little pain she felt, but knew not whence,
A little loosening of her vestal frost:
And she was sad for *him*—not knowing yet
How lightly men can love, how soon forget.

'Twas a grey, misty, miserable day,
And he would sit, she thought, alone and drear
In dingy lodgings; or perchance would stray
Out in the busy street, with none to cheer,
No one to sound his lonely heart's abysm,
And comfort him with German Pessimism.

A stirring as of springtide he had wrought
In that fair breast which yet he could not win;
She pitied, and she wondered, and she thought:
They say that Pity is to Love akin—
Agreed—with one important reservation—
She is at best a very poor relation.

For Clarice neither loved the swain himself,
Nor dreamed of being some day some one's wife;
But he, like those great Germans on the shelf,
Suggested a new way of viewing life:
The first poor swallow does not make a summer,
Yet is he a thrice memorable comer.

Her father—might she speak to him? In vain!
He would have scorned a modern love affair;
It never entered his most learned brain
That this unmothered daughter needed care;
And he was seeking, in that dust-heap dark,
Some mouldy scandal touching Joan of Arc.

She had no comrades; books were all her friends;
And even these had failed her utterly,
For none could teach her how to make amends,
None could restore her nature's harmony;
Nor found she any grief so vague as hers
Recorded by the ancient chroniclers.

The classic beauty either loves her wooer,
Or else she hates him in the same degree:
Daphne was glad to 'scape her bright pursuer
By branching out into a laurel-tree;
Queen Dido slew herself that luckless day
When the too pious Trojan sailed away.

These old companions have no kindly aid
For any heart in lore of love unlearned;
So, of her fluctuating thoughts afraid,
To Spenser and to Shakespeare Clarice turned,
And read of all sweet ladies wooed by men,
From Una chaste to wifely Imogen.

She read, and pondered, and read o'er again
The moonlight vows of glowing Juliet;
She read how scorning doubt, delay, and pain,
Sir Scudamour found white-robed Amoret,
And led her by the coy resisting hand
From sovran Cytherea's priestess-band.

And much she marvelled how such things might be;
"And such things are," she thought, "this very day,
But Heaven in grace has left me fancy-free,
And this is well; and *he* is gone away:
My father now must analyse alone
Those blotches on the shield of valiant Joan."

But, as the days and weeks and months went on,
Less calm she grew; more anxious to believe
That she was happier since the youth had gone,
That she was no fond simple girl, to grieve
For a mere fantasy; but ne'ertheless
She oft forgot her reasoned happiness.

And having no one else to think about,
She thought of Wilfred; seemed to see him, hear
Him speak: and his successor was a lout
Who made that inward vision doubly clear;
For slow he was of speech, and dull of eye,
And short, and round, and rubicund, and shy.

In study and in dreams, one long year passed:
The house seemed shadowed by some direful ban;
For every day was lonelier than the last,
Each book the dullest ever writ by man:
Clarice had half begun to doubt her boast,
When—a three-volume novel came by post!

She knew the writing—rapid, firm, and fine;
She looked within—and there was Wilfred's name—
The letters rose and danced along the line,
Mocking her quivering lips and cheeks aflame:
This was his book, his voice, his heart; she sighed,
And turned the leaves with a sad thrill of pride.

'Twas the first novel she had ever read—
Think of it, Mudie's votaries and Smith's!
Ambrosially her sky-born soul was fed
On the sun's poetry in old-world myths,
But never knew what wealth of weed and flower
His tireless beams engender hour by hour.

And Wilfred's heroine was a maiden queen
Like Clarice, bred on such Olympian food:
Surely she saw her own transfigured mien—
"But no," she thought, "for I am not so good,
So fair—some other's portrait this must be,
And her he loves, and has forgotten me."

She read with pain and pleasure; now she pored,
Jealously, o'er some page with passion fraught,
And wondered what fair Goddess he adored;
Now, her heart sprang to meet some bright-clad thought;
For thoughts there were, rich ears of harvest-gold,
Not choked with tares and poppies, as of old.

Not one day thus she pored, but many days;
She knew the volumes three almost by heart,
She lived in the book's life, thought in its phrase,
And so for weeks she conned and mused apart;
Till, as it chanced, one afternoon there came
A visitor of antiquarian fame.

A blear-eyed bookworm; yet he was a shade
More human than her father; he had penned
Stout vindications of the slandered Maid
Of Orleans, till he half estranged his friend:
He took the scutcheon of that virgin knight,
And either whitewashed, or else washed it white.

Now the pair sat and argued; but at last
The visitor, right glad to end the strife
When Clarice entered, left the angry Past,
And stooped to safer themes of modern life;
Of dynamite he spoke, and what could ail
The Irish; then of books—of Wilfred's tale.

"The book is good—or rather, not so bad
As one might augur from its great success;
You know the young romancer—it is sad
When budding brains are doomed to idleness;
For he is ill—they say, in doubtful case,
Alone, in lodgings,"—and he named the place.

Poor Clarice stole away; the old man's words
Chilled her like death; she saw the sun grow dim;
And like the fluttering of imprisoned birds
She felt wild pulses throb in every limb:
To a dull corner of her room she crept,
And there, till night was black, she crouched and wept.

But in the midnight watches she began,
Thinking of *his* pain, to forget her own;
And all her strenuous soul was bent to plan
How she might aid him; for that word—"Alone,"
Rang in her ears; she knew, as ne'er before,
The load of bitter meaning that it bore.

Pure innocence—what counsellor is worse?—
Guided and guarded her in all she did;
She had no friend, not even an old nurse,
To tell her what was lawful, what forbid;
And so resolved—lacking such nurse or friend—
That Wilfred she must seek, and watch, and tend.

Then Clarice slept, and dreamed that Wilfred's book
Became a world; its chapters palaces;
And she its Goddess: but an earthquake shook
The domes of light and rainbow terraces:
The miraged earth engulphed its phantom race,
And left its two Immortals face to face.

III.

"How lightly men can love, how soon forget!"
I said—yet some there be not false or fickle:
For one, the blind god wings an arrowlet
No deadlier pointed than a sweetbriar prickle;
For one, a dart fledged with Tartarean flame,
Barbed, venomed, and thrice cursed in Hecate's name.

Neither the rose-thorn nor the poisoned arrow
Was sped for Wilfred—but a keen-tipped shaft,
That rankled deep, yet pierced not bone and marrow,
And still he dined, debated, jested, laughed;
The while his heart was like a tooth, whose fang
Aches with dull woe, or with fierce throbbing pang.

For one bright image lived before his eyes;
Where'er he moved, the haunting shape was there:
And long he pondered what rich sacrifice
Could win its beauty; till the vision fair,
As saint from heaven instructs an eremite,
Taught her sad thrall to worship her aright.

She made herself the centre of a world
Peopled with gracious phantoms indistinct;
But, as he gazed, a golden mist upfurled,
And all was clearly shaped, and brightly tinct:
How could he choose but chronicle from far
The story of that new-created star?

And thus he dreamed and wrote, until his dream
Was all set forth in fine-writ manuscript;
He felt, at the last page of the last ream,
As though in some great argosy he shipped
His wealth; not with the trader's avarice keen,
But as the hard-won ransom of a queen.

And the book prospered wheresoe'er it went;
Much fame had Wilfred, and a little gold,
Yet thought of the one copy that he sent
To Clarice, more than of the hundreds sold;
And for her smile, had been content to lose
Even the most nectareous of reviews.

'Tis sweet, in truth, to feel oneself a god
Shaping with words a spirit-universe,
Touching to various life the formless clod,
Winning fresh glory e'en from Fate perverse,
That foe to plans divine and human toils,
Which like a snake in every Eden coils.

Such deities are mortal; and when these,
As once their sire Apollo, love in vain,
And grant the willing mind no hour of ease,
But still toward high achievement strive and strain,
What marvel if the genial visage pales,
And the pulse languishes, and the strength fails?

'Twas thus with Wilfred; though the bookworm old
Had somewhat overdrawn his piteous plight,
Most truly might that learned man have told
Of many a torpid day and tossing night,
Filled with sick hope of one approving line
From Clarice—but there came no word or sign.

One cheerless afternoon, upon his couch
Brooding he lay; there came a tap—the door
Soft-opened—sure his dazzled eyes could vouch
That the fair image kept in his heart's core
They saw; come haply as a cruel wraith,
With cold ethereal gifts to mock his faith.

The maiden entered; the dim light aslant
On his pale face, constrained her like a charm;
She felt and seemed a spectral visitant
Of one in mortal straits: on languid arm
He raised himself, with an uncertain cry
Of "Clarice!" and sank backward wearily.

Then all the wifehood and the motherhood
That in her virgin heart close-hidden lay
Sprang forth ; the voice of her quick-pulsing blood
Rebuked her coming, and yet murmured " Stay ! "
She stood there an Olympian goddess mute
And blushing, with soft eyes irresolute.

At last she spoke—" Forgive me ! but I knew
That you were ill, alone—and I am come
With fruit and medicines—if I weary you,
Tell me, and bid me go "—here she grew dumb,
And cold, and faint, and all her thoughts forgot,
Because so wild he gazed, yet answered not.

He lay and watched her timid attitudes,
The rosy colour mantling in her cheek,
Her faltering phrases, with brief interludes
Of sighs ; he watched, and did not stir or speak :
But when, like one who in strange peril stands,
She tottered, grew death-pale, flung out her hands,

He rose with desperate hunger in his face,
Clasped her with arms that trembled as they strained,
Kissed the fair head that bent to his embrace,
The lily cheeks, the eyelids violet-veined ;
And held her long, although she faintly strove
To free herself, in very fear of love.

She did not know the feeling of a kiss,
Except her father's—which had not been warm—
And now she shrank and shuddered from her bliss,
E'en as a thirsting wretch before the storm
Of wind and rain, that must renew his life,
Unless he die in the tumultuous strife.

At length he half-released her—"Sweet," he said,
"This is my fruit, my medicine; were I blind
Now must I see—must live, if I were dead;
You are my breath, my pulse, my inmost mind;
Music you are, whose mournfulness and mirth
Reveal the Will of this phantasmal Earth."

She blushed at his remembrance of that page
In Schopenhauer—"Ah forgive!" she cried—
"I was a tame-bred goldfinch in its cage,
Not knowing that the world is all outside;
Yet such poor birds will beat the bars, and sing
Of hope, and build an idle nest in Spring."

"Yet nay," he smiled, "you are Olympian-born,
You are Egeria's self, the nymph who blest
Rome's king with laws from Heaven: that gloomy morn
When I arose from nightmare-laden rest
A banished man, you sent your sprite divine,
That pitying led me to the fountain-shrine."

What more fond vows they uttered—how they planned
The future's wedded joy—I need not tell,
For every love-taught soul will understand;
Nor how, when twilight came, they broke the spell
Reluctantly, that Clarice home might haste,
Yet once again, and still once more embraced.

That night she dreamed that over fertile ground
And blossomed herbage the two lovers trod;
The air was filled with an Æolian sound
That sang of secret life beneath the sod,
And all pure fragrances of flower and fruit
Lived in the music of that fitful lute.

Of couching flocks it chanted; of the bird
Nested in shade; of all things that have breath;
Of human fate; and still entranced they heard,
And knew the harmonies of Birth and Death:
Till downward flowed the dream, and bore her deep
Into the dark unhaunted caves of Sleep.

RESIPISCENTIA, Etc.

RESIPISCENTIA.

"Ye must be born again."

First Voice.

Good morrow, comrade! Whence that look elate?
Where are thy sins and fears, a mocking host?
One week ago, thou wast as I, who hate
Both day and night—day most.

Second Voice.

Glad tidings of great joy! that host is gone!
I prayed to Christ an unbelieving prayer,
Half blasphemous, half mad—but straight there shone
Into my soul's despair

A strange, pure light—then on my brow I felt
A healing hand, and on my sleepless eyes;
Till, knowing nothing, feeling all, I knelt,
And with deep groans and sighs

Yielded to Christ my soul, its secret need,
Its woe, its doubt, its dread, its self-disdain,
Its myriad petty sins, that grow and breed,
And, mob-like, rule the brain.

All these he took away—he made me yield
The last regret, the lingering sense of wrong;
I am as one from year-long tortures healed,
Made sound, and hale, and strong—

Who every morning feels a sweet new joy
Because he wakes without the accustomed pain;
Who runs and leaps more lightly than a boy,
Having been born again

Into a long-forgotten world of health,
Where he may woo bright eyes, nor need to fear
That but in pity or in lust of wealth
They feign to hold him dear.

Where he with other men may strain and strive—
To win he scarcely craves—let it suffice
That heart, brain, limbs, so bounteously alive
Are his full Paradise.

Oh come and taste and see what virtues lie
In this Elixir that has made me whole—
Though thou be sick to death, thou shalt not die—
Repent, and heal thy soul!

First Voice.

Brave words, my friend—I do not grudge thy mirth;
Though life be one remorse, I yet endure,
Well knowing there be ills upon this earth
Which have not any cure.

Thou hast been lame awhile, and now canst run;
Awhile thou hast been blind, but seest now:
Go, leap and praise thy God for strength new-won—
But I am not as thou.

Pain comes of sudden hurt or slow disease;
Break thou a bone, the surgeon sets it well—
But show him leprous sores—will he cure these?
Alas, thou canst not tell.

Life as it is, and must be, and has been
No piecemeal penitence can show aright,
Deeming the one part foul, the other clean,
Here black, and there snow-white.

That this day week, I left my task unwrought;
That yesterday, I said not what I meant;
That one hour since, I grossly sinned in thought—
Not thus do I repent.

Nor do I lay a finger on my shame,
Calling this nerve, that muscle, falsely built;
I can but say—"This Self, this physical frame,
Is one incarnate Guilt."

Could I believe thy glorious Gospel true,
That were no cure for this organic ill:
Can Christ unweave my tissues, mould anew
The matrix of my will?

My grief has no beginning and no end;
I do repent of antenatal sin,
Whose poisoning juices thread my veins, and blend
With the fresh life within.

That in my blood this virus I must keep
To-morrow, next week, next month, all my years,
Until my day of death—for this I weep
With ignominious tears.

THIRD VOICE.

Nay, hope is thine! Who chants this grim complaint
Has steadfast heart, free mind, and insight keen;
Such man may purge away the leprous taint
While yet he cries "Unclean!"

Daily thy tissues die—are born afresh
Daily, not moving thee to joy or dole;
Yet all the slow mutations of thy flesh
Gently transmute thy soul.

Go, live in hope and labour, fearing nought;
Starve the foul germs of hate, and lust, and greed;
Force day by day thy brain to patient thought,
Thy hand to earnest deed.

Long were the darkling months before thy birth,
Long years regenerate a frame defiled:
It may be thou shalt enter heaven on earth
Clean as a pure-born child.

THE RECLUSE.

" Heu ! Quanto minus est cum reliquis versari, quam tui meminisse ! "

HAVING known Love, all its unmeasured heights,
All its unfathomed depths, I go my way,
In full content that these supreme delights
Come not, like meaner pleasures, day by day.

Such lesser joys I yielded with few tears,
Reserving nought, paying Love's perfect price :
Shall I bewail my thirty desert years,
I, who have lived three days in Paradise ?

Nay, smile not, friend ! I know not which is best,
Plucked rosebud, or remembered asphodel,
A mortal wife, or an Olympian guest :
Well hast thou chosen ; but I, too, chose well.

LOVE'S MIRROR.

I LIVE with love encompassed round,
And glowing light that is not mine,
And yet am sad; for, truth to tell,
It is not I you love so well;
Some fair Immortal, robed and crowned,
You hold within your heart's dear shrine.

Cast out the Goddess! let me in;
Faulty I am, yet all your own,
But this bright phantom you enthrone
Is such as mortal may not win.

And yet this beauty that you see
Is like to mine, though nobler far;
Your radiant guest resembles me
E'en as the sun is like a star.

Then keep her in your heart of hearts,
And let me look upon her face,
And learn of that transcendent grace,
Till all my meaner self departs,

And, while I love you more and more,
My spirit, gazing on the light,
Becomes, in loveliness and might,
The glorious Vision you adore.

FRIENDSHIP.

The human soul that crieth at thy gates,
Of man or woman, alien or akin,
'Tis thine own Self that for admission waits—
Rise, let it in.

Bid not thy guest but sojourn and depart,
Keep him, if so it may be, till the end,
If thou have strength and purity of heart
To be his friend.

Not only, at bright morn, to wake his mind
With noble thoughts, and send him forth with song,
Nor only, when night falls, his wounds to bind ;
But all day long

To help with love, with labour, and with lore,
To triumph when, by others' aid, he wins,
To carry all his sorrows, and yet more—
To bear his sins ;

To keep a second conscience in thine own,
Which suffers wound on wound, yet strongly lives,
Which takes no bribe of tender look or tone,
And yet forgives.

But, should some mortal vileness blast with death
Thy love for comrade, leader, kinsman, wife—
Seek no elixir to restore false breath,
And loathsome life.

Thy love is slain—thou canst not make it whole
With all thy store of wine, and oil, and bread:
Some passions are but flesh—thine had a soul,
And that is dead.

CHRIST, THE NAZARENE.

The copyist group was gathered round
A time-worn fresco, world-renowned,
Whose central glory once had been
The face of Christ, the Nazarene.

And every copyist of the crowd
With his own soul that face endowed,
Gentle, severe, majestic, mean ;
But which was Christ, the Nazarene ?

Then one who watched them made complaint,
And marvelled, saying, " Wherefore paint
Till ye be sure your eyes have seen
The face of Christ, the Nazarene ? "

SONG.

THINK not I roam afield
With heart untrue;
The gifts my rambles yield
Are all for you.

The bird must leave her nest
And fledglings five,
The honey-bee must rest
Far from her hive.

New regions I explore
While day is bright;
My heart, with richer store,
Goes home at night.

TIME AND LOVE.

Time hobbles, but Love flies ;
One moment, say the wise,
They pass together :
Not Cupid's curls of gold
But Time's grey forelock hold,
A trusty tether.

For Time, once safely caught,
Is servant to your thought
For ever after ;
But wanton Love will snip
The curl you hold, and trip
Away with laughter.

Yet if my hint you heed,
With all his craft and speed,
He ne'er shall flout you ;
Catch Cupid by the wing,
For then he cannot spring
To Heaven without you.

EVOLUTIONAL EROTICS.

SCIENTIFIC WOOING.

I was a youth of studious mind,
Fair Science was my mistress kind,
  And held me with attraction chemic ;
No germs of Love attacked my heart,
Secured as by Pasteurian art
  Against that fatal epidemic.

For when my daily task was o'er
I dreamed of H_2SO_4,
  While stealing through my slumbers placid
Came Iodine, with violet fumes,
And Sulphur, with its yellow blooms,
  And whiffs of Hydrochloric Acid.

My daily visions, thoughts, and schemes
With wildest hope illumed my dreams,
  The daring dreams of trustful twenty :
I might accomplish my desire,
And set the river Thames on fire
  If but Potassium were in plenty !

Alas! that yearnings so sublime
Should all be blasted in their prime
By hazel eyes and lips vermilion!
Ye gods! restore the halcyon days
While yet I walked in Wisdom's ways,
And knew not Mary Maud Trevylyan!

Yet nay! the sacrilegious prayer
Was not mine own, oh fairest fair!
Thee, dear one, will I ever cherish;
Thy worshipped image shall remain
In the grey thought-cells of my brain
Until their form and function perish.

Away with books, away with cram
For Intermediate Exam.!
Away with every College duty!
Though once Agnostic to the core
A virgin Saint I now adore,
And swear belief in Love and Beauty.

Yet when I meet her tranquil gaze,
I dare not plead, I dare not praise,
Like other men with other lasses;
She's never kind, she's never coy,
She treats me simply as a boy,
And asks me how I like my classes!

I covet not her golden dower—
Yet surely Love's attractive power
  Directly as the mass must vary—
But ah! inversely as the square
Of distance! shall I ever dare
  To cross the gulf, and gain my Mary?

So chill she seems—and yet she might
Welcome with radiant heat and light
  My courtship, if I once began it;
For is not e'en the palest star
That gleams so coldly from afar
  A sun to some revolving planet?

My Mary! be a solar sphere!
Envy no comet's mad career,
  No arid, airless lunar crescent!
Oh for a spectroscope to show
That in thy gentle eyes doth glow
  Love's vapour, pure and incandescent!

Bright fancy! can I fail to please
If with similitudes like these
  I lure the maid to sweet communion?
My suit, with Optics well begun,
By Magnetism shall be won,
  And closed at last in Chemic union!

At this I'll aim, for this I'll toil,
And this I'll reach—I will, by Boyle,
By Avogadro, and by Davy!
When every science lends a trope
To feed my love, to fire my hope,
Her maiden pride must cry "*Peccavi!*"

I'll sing a deep Darwinian lay
Of little birds with plumage gay,
Who solved by courtship Life's enigma;
I'll teach her how the wild-flowers love,
And why the trembling stamens move,
And how the anthers kiss the stigma.

Or Mathematically true
With rigorous Logic will I woo,
And not a word I'll say at random;
Till urged by Syllogistic stress,
She falter forth a tearful "Yes,"
A sweet "*Quod erat demonstrandum!*"

THE NEW ORTHODOXY.

So, dear Fred, you're not content
Though I quote the books you lent,
And I've kept that spray you sent
  Of the milk-white heather;
For you fear I'm too "advanced"
To remember all that chanced
In the old days, when we danced,
  Walked, and rode together.

Trust me, Fred, beneath the curls
Of the most "advanced" of girls,
Many a foolish fancy whirls,
  Bidding Fact defiance,
And the simplest village maid
Needs not to be much afraid
Of her sister, sage and staid,
  Bachelor of Science.

Ah ! while yet our hope was new
Guardians thought 'twould never do
That Sir Frederick's heir should woo
Little Amy Merton :
So the budding joy they snatched
From our hearts, so meetly matched,
You to Oxford they despatched,
Me they sent to Girton.

Were the vows all writ in dust ?
No—you're one-and-twenty—just—
And you write—" We will, we must
Now, at once, be married ! "
Nay, you plan the wedding trip !
Softly, sir ! there's many a slip
Ere the goblet to the lip
Finally is carried.

Oh, the wicked tales I hear !
Not that you at Ruskin jeer,
Nor that at Carlyle you sneer,
With his growls dyspeptic :
But that, having read in vain
Huxley, Tyndall, Clifford, Bain,
All the scientific train—
You're a hardened sceptic !

Things with fin, and claw, and hoof
Join to give us perfect proof
That our being's warp and woof
We from near and far win ;
Yet your flippant doubts you vaunt,
And—to please a maiden aunt—
You've been heard to say you can't
Pin your faith to Darwin !

Then you jest, because Laplace
Said this Earth was nought but gas
Till the vast rotating mass
Denser grew and denser :
Something worse they whisper too,
But I'm sure it *can't* be true—
For they tell me, Fred, that you
Scoff at Herbert Spencer !

Write—or telegraph—or call !
Come yourself and tell me all :
No fond hope shall me enthrall,
No regret shall sway me :
Yet—until the worst is said,
Till I know your faith is dead,
I remain, dear doubting Fred,
Your believing

AMY.

NATURAL SELECTION.

I HAD found out a gift for my fair,
I had found where the cave-men were laid ;
Skull, femur, and pelvis were there,
And spears, that of silex they made.

But he ne'er could be true, she averred,
Who would dig up an ancestor's grave—
And I loved her the more when I heard
Such filial regard for the Cave.

My shelves, they are furnished with stones
All sorted and labelled with care,
And a splendid collection of bones,
Each one of them ancient and rare ;

One would think she might like to retire
To my study—she calls it a "hole!"
Not a fossil I heard her admire,
But I begged it, or borrowed, or stole.

But there comes an idealess lad,
With a strut, and a stare, and a smirk;
And I watch, scientific though sad,
The Law of Selection at work.

Of Science he hasn't a trace,
He seeks not the How and the Why,
But he sings with an amateur's grace,
And he dances much better than I.

And we know the more dandified males
By dance and by song win their wives—
'Tis a law that with *Aves* prevails,
And even in *Homo* survives.

Shall I rage as they whirl in the valse?
Shall I sneer as they carol and coo?
Ah no! for since Chloe is false,
I'm certain that Darwin is true!

SOLOMON REDIVIVUS, 1886.

WHAT am I? Ah, you know it,
I am the modern Sage,
Seer, savant, merchant, poet—
I am, in brief, the Age.

Look not upon my glory
Of gold and sandal-wood,
But sit and hear a story
From Darwin and from Buddh.

Count not my Indian treasures,
All wrought in curious shapes,
My labours and my pleasures,
My peacocks and my apes;

For when you ask me riddles,
And when I answer each,
Until my fifes and fiddles
Burst in and drown our speech,

Oh then your soul astonished
Must surely faint and fail,
Unless, by me admonished,
You hear our wondrous tale.

We were a soft Amœba
In ages past and gone,
Ere you were Queen of Sheba,
And I King Solomon.

Unorganed, undivided,
We lived in happy sloth,
And all that you did I did,
One dinner nourished both :

Till you incurred the odium
Of fission and divorce—
A severed pseudopodium
You strayed your lonely course.

When next we met together
Our cycles to fulfil,
Each was a bag of leather,
With stomach and with gill.

But our Ascidian morals
Recalled that old mischance,
And we avoided quarrels
By separate maintenance.

Long ages passed—our wishes
Were fetterless and free,
For we were jolly fishes,
A-swimming in the sea.

We roamed by groves of coral,
We watched the youngsters play—
The memory and the moral
Had vanished quite away.

Next, each became a reptile,
With fangs to sting and slay;
No wiser ever crept, I'll
Assert, deny who may.

But now, disdaining trammels
Of scale and limbless coil,
Through every grade of mammals
We passed with upward toil.

Till, anthropoid and wary
  Appeared the parent ape,
And soon we grew less hairy,
  And soon began to drape.

So, from that soft Amœba,
  In ages past and gone,
You've grown the Queen of Sheba,
  And I, King Solomon.

SONNETS.

HELOISE.

I.

BRIDE.

COME in my dreams, belovèd! though thou seem
  Less kind, less noble, than by truthful day;
  Even in sleep my heart has strength to say—
"His love is changeless—this is but a dream:"
Yet rather come at sunrise, with the beam
  Of thought renewed; and still, when eve is grey,
  Inspire me, as I tread my lonely way,
With thine own dauntless will and hope supreme.

Ah, let me die, ere meaner moods have power
  To dim these glories that within me shine!
Give me black night or this unclouded sun,
Swift death or life immortal, in that hour
  When all my soul is filled and fired with thine,
When thou and I are equal, being one.

II.

Nun.

This is the doom I must henceforth fulfil :
To hide my heart through days, and months, and years ;
To look in anxious eyes, and lull their fears ;
To lose all hope, and strive with joyless will ;
To sing and pray, scarce knowing good from ill ;
To hear stale converse, as an idiot hears ;
To tread the cloistered courts with burning tears,
Forced backward to their fount, yet rising still.

Nay, there is comfort ! E'en the sick may smile,
Knowing for pain a swift and gentle cure ;
I can be patient, and can wait awhile,
Nor curse the heedless heavens with moaning breath :
Though for a night my weeping may endure,
Joy comes with morn—that joy, whose name is Death.

III.

ABBESS.

Sweet is life's crown of quiet; sweet is age,
With tranquil days, unmarred by joy or dole,
Void of desire, save that with just control
I may administer Christ's heritage:
Long since he heard my vow, the heartless gage
Not spurning; took my tear-stained, love-writ scroll,
And words of strength and healing for the soul
Wrote with his own heart's blood across the page.

Passion is all forgotten, pain is fled:
Yet oft, 'mid idle phantoms of the mind,
Returns my earlier Self, with scornful eyes,
Saying—"Thou deemest age hath made thee wise,
And knowest not that thou art deaf, and blind,
And palsied. Live in peace; for I am dead."

HERCULES.

This fruitage from the far Hesperides
I bring to great Eurystheus, feared and hated,
Whom I, his slave, nor hate nor fear; my fated,
My full reward, he has no power to seize,
Nor is it bought with golden gauds like these;
I seek supreme delights, untold, undated;
Of joys wherewith these kings of men are sated
Right little recks the Jove-born Hercules.

I live content to bear my destined burden,
To toil unthanked, unhonoured, void of guerdon,
To work a tyrant's will through lonely years;
That, neither shunning pain nor scorning pleasure,
My strenuous soul may win Olympian leisure,
And dwell in peace among the Gods, my peers.

PROMETHEUS AND PANDORA.

These pangs I bear through lingering centuries
For slavish Man, in pity and in scorn ;
Glad, while by birds of Jove my breast is torn
Till sunset, that I spurned his luring prize :
Yet when she came, that queen with jacinth eyes
August yet changeful, like the sea at morn,
I could have triumphed that mine Earth had borne
A creature fashioned in such glorious wise.

Nay ! but my will were firm, though Heaven should give
A Goddess pure. One only gift I seek,
Freedom for Man ; or, this renounced, I live
Self-sentenced to mine own immortal hate :
Better the rock, the chain, the eagle's beak,
And this fulfilment of my chosen fate.

THE NEBULAR THEORY.

This is the genesis of Heaven and Earth.
In the beginning was a formless mist
Of atoms isolate, void of life; none wist
Aught of its neighbour atom, nor any mirth,
Nor woe, save its own vibrant pang of dearth;
Until a cosmic motion breathed and hissed
And blazed through the black silence; atoms kissed,
Clinging and clustering, with fierce throbs of birth,
And raptures of keen torment, such as stings
Demons who wed in Tophet; the night swarmed
With ringèd fiery clouds, in glowing gyres
Rotating: æons passed: the encircling rings
Split into satellites; the central fires
Froze into suns; and thus the world was formed.

THE PESSIMIST'S VISION.

I DREAMED, and saw a modern Hell, more dread
Than Dante's pageant; not with gloom and glare,
But all new forms of madness and despair
Filled it with complex tortures, some Earth-bred,
Some born in Hell: eternally full-fed
Ghosts of all foul disease-germs thronged the air:
And as with trembling feet I entered there,
A Demon barred the way, and mocking said—

"Through our dim vales and gulfs thou need'st not rove;
From thine own Earth and from its happiest lot
Thy lust for pain may draw full nourishment,
With poignant spice of passion; knowest thou not
Fiends wed for hate as mortals wed for love,
Yet find not much more anguish? Be content."

THE GIFT.

From Paradise there came, one Maytide morn,
An Almoner of love, with gifts divine :
To some he brought rich draughts of magic wine ;
To some, who laboured in their fields forlorn,
Sweet showers and sunbeams for the springing corn ;
Then me he called, with gracious word and sign,
But when I looked what bounty should be mine,
One fire-bright drop he gave me, as in scorn.

" Angel ! to these thou givest present mirth,
To those, the promise of a golden crop
In Autumn ; was my hope so little worth ? "
Smiling, the Angel answered—" Share and prove
Their joy, if so thou wilt—in that one drop
Thou hast the life and quintessence of Love."

ANDREW MARVELL'S "DEFINITION OF LOVE."

"My love is of a birth as rare
As 'tis for object strange and high,
It was begotten of Despair
Upon Impossibility."

Love sought me—not the blind god infantine,
But Love with lucent eyes and pensive brow;
And as I mused with what adoring vow
I should accost that visitant divine,
He said, "Think but a thought and I am thine,
Exalting thee to heavenly heights, which thou
Without me canst not reach; yet ponder now,
Nor rashly to my power thy life resign;

For never will I grant thy full desire,
But will transpierce thy heart with many a wound,
And in the end will leave thee sorrowing."
Then said I—"Though thy voice be sternly tuned,
Though still thou feed, and ne'er assuage, my fire,
Yet I rejoice, and take thee for my King."

POET AND BOTANIST.

Fair are the bells of this bright-flowering weed;
Nectar and pollen treasuries, where grope
Innocent thieves; the Poet lets them ope
And bloom, and wither, leaving fruit and seed
To ripen; but the Botanist will speed
To win the secret of the blossom's hope,
And with his cruel knife and microscope
Reveal the embryo life, too early freed.

Yet the mild Poet can be ruthless too,
Crushing the tender leaves to work a spell
Of love or fame; the record of the bud
He will not seek, but only bids it tell
His thoughts, and render up its deepest hue
To tinge his verse as with his own heart's blood.

SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY.

We went a-begging for a nobler creed,
We craved the living bread and wine of thought,
That Eucharist, which is not sold or bought,
But freely given; yet, did any heed,
'Twas but to offer pence, or bid us feed
From empty sacramental vessels, wrought
Of gold or brass; we spent our prayers for nought,
Faint and athirst with spiritual need.

Then some brought grapes, and some brought corn and yeast,
Plenteous and good; yet still we murmured, "Give!
This is scant fare when thirst and hunger cry:
Teach us to change our garner to a feast,
Preparing food by which the mind may live,
Perennial loaves, and flagons never dry."

THE DOUBLE RAINBOW.

I saw the passions and desires of Man
  Blent in a thousand-coloured arc of light,
  A double rainbow; but so jewel-bright
The scarf of Iris had been pale and wan
Beside it: not the torrent-bows that span
  A river-fall at noon; nor birds whose flight
  Gleams ruby and gold; nor columned chrysolite
In caves enchanted; nought, since light began,

Could match its glories: but the inner arch
  With Joy and Anguish too intensely burned
For eyes that love the cloudy robes of March
And April, and calm Autumn's golden dress:
  Half-blinded, to the outer bow they turned,
Soft with remembered Grief and Happiness.

RECOMPENSE.

THE wine-flushed monarch slept—but in his ear
An angel breathed—"Repent; or choose the flame
Quenchless." In dread he woke, but not in shame,
Deep musing—"Sin I love, yet Hell I fear."
Wherefore he left his feasts, and minions dear,
And justly ruled, and died a saint in name.
But when his hasting spirit heavenward came
A stern Voice cried—"Oh Soul! what dost thou here?

"Love I forswore, and wine, and kept my vow
To live a just and joyless life, and now
I crave reward." The Voice came like a knell—
"Fool! dost thou hope to find again thy mirth,
And those foul joys thou didst renounce on earth?
Yea, enter in! My Heaven shall be thy Hell!

TRANSLATIONS.

IDEALS.

From the German of Schiller.

Ah faithless! canst thou thus desert me,
With all fair thoughts and fancies gay,
With all thy joys, with all thy sorrows
Wilt thou unpitying haste away?
Ah youthful prime of golden joyance,
Can nought delay thee, fleeting fast?
In vain! The river seeks the ocean,
Eternity engulphs the Past.

Quenched are the suns whose gladsome lustre
Athwart the road of youth was cast,
And banished all the fair Ideals
That fired the rapt enthusiast,
Dead is the faith in sweet illusions,
Beings, that in my dream had birth,
And reft away their god-like beauty
By rude realities of Earth.

As once, with ardent supplication
Pygmalion clasped the sculptured form,
Until the pale cold cheeks of marble
Flushed with emotion, bright and warm;
So I, aflame with youthful passion,
Dead Nature to my bosom pressed,
Till she to breathe, to glow, to tremble,
Began upon my poet-breast;

Till, kindling to my fiery impulse,
At last the Dumb her silence broke,
With answering love returned my kisses,
And understood my heart that spoke:
The tree, the flower, for me had voices,
For me the silver fount could sing;
I felt my life's re-echoing music
Give soul to every senseless thing.

A universe of mighty yearning
Throbbed in my bosom's narrow bound,
To issue forth, to live incarnate,
In deed and word, in form and sound:
How great this world, how nobly fashioned,
While yet the bud contained it all!
How few, alas! the opened blossoms,
And even these, how weak and small!

Oh how, on wings of dauntless courage,
All blissful in his dream of truth,
Not yet by any care embridled,
Forth on Life's journey sprang the youth!
His soaring aspirations bore him
Even to Ether's palest star;
For Hope, with strong untiring pinions,
Was nought too high and nought too far.

How lightly was he carried onward!
What power could stay his glad advance?
How swift before Life's rolling chariot
His airy escort seemed to dance!
For there was Love, with sweetest promise,
And there, with star-set crown, was Fame,
And Fortune with her golden chaplet,
And Truth all robed in sunlight came.

But ah! those bright companions vanished
Ere half the destined course was run,
They turned away their faithless footsteps,
Till all had left me, one by one.
Away fled Fortune, nimbly speeding,
The thirst to Know was unallayed,
And meeting round Truth's sunbright image,
The storms of Doubt thick darkness made.

I saw Fame's crown, of old so sacred,
Profaned upon a vulgar head;
Too soon, alas, the short spring over,
The beauteous time of Love had fled;
And every hour the silence deepened,
And lonelier grew the rugged way,
Till even Hope could scarcely lighten
Its shadows by one pallid ray.

But which of all that frolic escort
Cheered with her constant love my road—
Stays with me still, consoles, and follows—
Yes, even to the dark abode?
Thou, gentle tender hand of Friendship,
Who all my sorest wounds hast bound,
With loving aid Life's burdens bearing,
Thou, whom I early sought and found,

And thou, who journeyest with her gladly,
Like her canst quell the spirit's storms;
Diligent Work, who wearies never,
Nor ruins, slowly though she forms;
Who in Eternity's vast fabric
But grain of sand on sand-grain rears,
Yet from the debt-roll of the ages,
Can strike out minutes, days, and years.

FRAGMENTS FROM FAUST.

I.

Mephistopheles on Logic. (*Part I.*)

Meph. Be careful of your time, so swiftly flies it,
But Order teaches how to utilise it.
And first, by my advice, dear friend,
Collegium logicum attend.
For there your mind is drilled and graced,
In Spanish boots 'tis tightly laced,
That now, with warier step, it may
Go plodding on in Thought's highway,
And not, mayhap, with zigzag light,
Go will-o'-the-wisping left and right.
And there they'll teach you, many a day,
That what you once did free and gay,
At *one* stroke, easy as eating and drinking,
Needs One! Two! Three!—the right way of thinking.
In the manufactory of Thought,
Like a weaver's masterpiece 'tis wrought,

Where *one* jerk moves a thousand threads,
The shuttles go shooting over and under,
The threads flow unseen, entwined and asunder,
One stroke a thousand filaments weds.
Then the Philosopher, in comes he,
And clearly proves, so *must* it be;
The First was so, the Second so,
Therefore the Third and Fourth were so,
And had the First and Second not been,
The Third and Fourth you ne'er had seen.
The students on all sides call him clever,
But not a student becomes a weaver.
To know and describe a living whole
One first of all drives out the soul,
Handles the parts and loses none,
Save, alas! the soul that made them one.
Encheiresin naturæ, Chemistry calls it,
Mocks itself, and knows not what befalls it.

Student. I don't seem quite to comprehend.

Meph. 'Twill all go better soon, my friend,
When you can qualify and quantify,
And properly can classify.

Student. I feel so stupid after all you've said,
As though a mill-wheel went round in my head.

II.

The Baccalaureus. (*Part II.*)

I tell you this is Youth's supreme vocation!
Before me was no World—'tis my creation:
'Twas I who raised the Sun from out the sea;
The Moon began her changeful course with me;
Day decked herself in dazzling robes to meet me;
Earth budded forth with leaves and flowers to greet me;
I gave the signal on that primal night
When all the host of heaven burst forth in light.
Who but myself saves man from the dominion
Of dogmas cramping, crushing, Philistinian?
So, free and gay, my spirit's voice I heed,
And follow where the inner light may lead,
Still hasting onward with a gladsome mind,
The Bright before me, and the Dark behind.

THE EYE.

From the German of Emil Rittershaus.

The human soul—a world in little;
The world—a greater human soul;
The eye of man—a radiant mirror,
That clear and true reflects the whole.

And, as in every eye thou meetest
The mirrored image is thine own,
Each mortal sees his soul reflected,
In all the world himself alone!

ON THE WATER.

From the German of Emmanuel Geibel.

Now hill and dale begin to bloom anew,
The tree-tops bud, and winds pass whispering through ;
Faint grow the bugle-notes, with sunset's red—
I would be merry, but my heart is dead.

My comrades ply their oars, and scorn delay,
The furrowed wave gleams back the starlight ray ;
To the guitar the dancing boat is sped—
Fain were I merry, but my heart is dead.

The moon is up, and clearer shine the skies,
From every bosom songs of mirth arise ;
In all our goblets wine glows darkly red—
Fain were I merry, but my heart is dead.

And could my Love rise up from out the grave,
And grant all dear delights that once she gave,
And say all tender words that once she said—
In vain ! The Past is past, the Dead are dead.

DANTE AND NINO.

From the Italian of Dante (*Purgatorio, Canto VIII. v.* 43-84).

AGAIN Sordello spoke—"Into this dell
Among the mighty Dead, now let us go,
The sight of thee will please the spirits well."
In but three steps, meseems, I was below,
And gazing on me only, one came nigh,
Attent, as though my face he fain would know.
It was the time when eve englooms the sky,
Yet not so dusk but that a closer view
Made clear the darkling path from eye to eye.
Noble Judge Nino, how I gloried when
I saw thou wast not with the damnëd crew!
All words of courteous greeting spake we; then
He asked—"How long since camest thou to us
Beneath this mount, o'er seas beyond our ken?"
"I came by those dread regions dolorous
This morning, with my first life undecayed,
In hope to gain the second, journeying thus."
And when they heard this answer that I made,
He and Sordello shrank back, as in fear,

Like folk by sudden wonder all dismayed.
This turned toward Virgil—that, to one who near
Was sitting, cried—"Up, Conrad, from thy place,
What God in mercy wills, come and see and hear!"
Then to me turning—"By that special grace
Granted to thee by Him, who from our sense
Conceals his primal Why, which none may trace—
When thou shalt pass beyond the seas, far hence,
Say to my little Joan, she must implore
For me, where heed is given to innocence.
Her mother loves me, so I think, no more,
Since she has cast aside the fillet white,
Which, heart-sick, she shall wish that still she wore.
From her thou mayest understand aright
How long will burn the fire of woman's love
Not kindled fresh by daily touch and sight.
Less nobly will her funeral pageant move
Beneath the Milan warrior's viper-shield
Than were Gallura's cock emblazed above."
Such words he uttered, seeming stamped and sealed
With that just ardour, whose attempered heat
His heart still cherished, and his face revealed.

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